Employed in a SNAP? The Impact of Work Requirements on Program Participation and Labor Supply

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November 2019

Abstract

Work requirements are common in many U.S. safety net programs. Evidence remains limited, however, on whether work requirements increase economic self-sufficiency or screen out vulnerable individuals. Using linked administrative data on food stamps (SNAP) and earnings with a regression discontinuity design, we find that work requirements reduce SNAP participation by 52 percent. Very low-income and homeless adults are disproportionately screened out. We statistically rule out employment increases of more than 2 percentage points. We find evidence of increased earnings near a key eligibility threshold, and provide conditions under which this trade-off improves or reduces welfare.

JEL Codes: I30, I38, J22

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1 Introduction

For decades, policymakers have sought to provide benefits to low-resource households in times of need without substantially reducing employment incentives among adults with the capacity to work. One common strategy is to require that beneficiaries sustain formal employment or participate in community service in order to receive benefits. Since 1996, some form of "work requirement" has existed in many means-tested programs, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Proponents argue that work requirements improve labor force attachment and, in the long run, promote self-sufficiency. Opponents contend that the primary effect of work requirements is to reduce benefits for the most vulnerable recipients in times of need.[1] Work requirements are once again taking center stage in policy debates: a proposed expansion of SNAP's work requirements was the central point of contention in the 2018 Farm Bill; and eighteen states have received approval or have applied to add work requirements to Medicaid, with a federal court decision pending for several states. This paper uses administrative data and a transparent identification strategy to evaluate the impact of work requirements on program participation and labor market outcomes in the context of SNAP.

To date, attempts to understand the impacts of modern work requirements have been limited by three factors. First, commonly used survey data sources severely and non-randomly under-report participation in means-tested programs (Meyer et al. 2014, Meyer and Mittag 2019). Second, credible quasi-experiments are difficult to find, since work requirements policies often remain stable over many years and are common across states. Third, the precise population affected by work requirements may be difficult to identify in the data: a study focused on current participants would miss a non-random set of individuals who were deterred from joining or unable stay in the program *due to* work requirements, while a study focused on a broader low-income population would include individuals who would not participate with or without work requirements. Focusing on too broad a population may increase estimation noise and model dependence.

This paper uses administrative panel data and multiple sources of variation to overcome these challenges. First, we use administrative data from Virginia's SNAP program to measure participation and characterize participants. We link these data to

[1] For example, see the American Enterprise Institute's "Poverty and Social Policy Debate Series: Federal Work Requirements" (available at: `aei.org/spotlight/federal-work-requirements-debate/)` and Lola Fadulu's "Why States Want Americans to Work for Medicaid" *The Atlantic*, April 2019 (available at: `theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/04/medicaid-work-requirements-seema-verma-cms/587026/`)

wage records from Virginia's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, allowing us to accurately measure program participation and UI-covered earnings without relying on survey data. Second, we exploit credible quasi-experiments based on the administrative details of Virginia's SNAP program. These include the 2013 reinstatement of work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs), which had been suspended during the Great Recession. We leverage the fact that work requirements only apply to participants under the age of 50 to construct regression discontinuity (RD) estimators of the effects of work requirements on program participation and labor market outcomes. Third, the administrative data allow us to focus the latter parts of the analysis on participants enrolled in SNAP just before work requirements were reinstated in Virginia. This population allows us to study screening using *ex ante* observed covariates, mitigates non-random selection into SNAP as a result of work requirements, and enables us to focus on a sample whose work behavior is most likely to be impacted by new SNAP policies.

Our results suggest that work requirements dramatically reduce SNAP participation among childless adults. In Virginia, the introduction of work requirements reduced participation among ABAWDs near the age cutoff by 52 percent after the eighteen-month roll-out period. Time patterns of participation, RD estimates, and placebo checks all corroborate this conclusion. Moreover, we provide suggestive evidence that the estimated magnitude of the participation reduction is generalizable to ages further from the policy cutoff. To provide a more precise counterfactual, we then focus our estimates on the stock of beneficiaries who were on SNAP just before work requirements took effect. Our RD estimates suggest that the introduction of work requirements reduced the rate of eighteen-month retention by 38 percent (24 percentage points) among this group. Work requirements induced a disproportionate degree of exit among homeless beneficiaries and beneficiaries with no earned income at the time of program entry, but disproportionately low additional exits among those with a history of disability.

By contrast, effects on employment are limited. Our point estimates are close to zero and we statistically rule out average employment increases of more than 2 percentage points. There is evidence of increased earnings near a key eligibility threshold, however, based on unconditional quantile regressions. To evaluate the costs and benefits of the policy, we calibrate a model that compares the losses to program participants against the gains to the government. Our results imply that work requirements reduce social welfare if the social planner values an additional dollar to a SNAP recipient more than \$1.52 to the representative taxpayer.

The paper builds upon a body of research studying work requirements and screening in means-tested programs. It is closely related to the theory developed by Besley and Coate

(1992), which formalizes the trade-off between providing safety net benefits and avoiding work disincentives. Empiricists have built upon this theoretical contribution along three tracks. One strand of literature documents the work disincentives inherent in means-tested and social insurance programs, providing evidence that income effects explain much of the causal relationship between government assistance and work (Autor and Duggan 2007, Fetter and Lockwood 2018). A handful of papers explore this relationship specifically in the setting of food stamps (Fraker and Moffitt 1988, Keane and Moffitt 1998, Hagstrom 1996, and Hoynes and Schanzenbach 2012). A second body of literature studies the heterogeneous impacts of administrative hurdles on potential beneficiaries in a variety of programs (Nichols and Zeckhauser 1982, Deshpande and Li 2019, Finkelstein and Notowidigdo 2019, Gray 2019).

The third track studies whether work requirements ameliorate possible distortions by promoting labor force participation and earnings. In the context of traditional welfare programs, a number of studies find that work requirements increase employment and exits from welfare but decrease total income among low-income households (Fang and Keane 2004; Grogger and Karoly 2005; Greenberg et al. 2009; Chan 2013; Card and Hyslop 2005; Chan and Moffitt 2018). A smaller set of papers investigate SNAP work requirements using survey data (Harris 2019; Stacy et al. 2018; Cuffey et al. 2015). These papers find mixed results on the effects of work requirements on employment, and typically estimate participation reductions that are less than half of those we find. This muted response could be explained by well-known measurement errors in survey questions regarding SNAP participation and by the difficulty of limiting the subset of survey respondents to those who are likely to be impacted by SNAP policy changes. One exception, Ribar et al. (2010), uses household-level administrative data from South Carolina to identify effects from variations in work requirements over counties and time.[2] A separate strand of time series results suggests that the implementation of work requirements coincides with substantial reductions in food stamp participation according to administrative data sources, although these studies often use less granular data sources than we have and are potentially threatened by legislative endogeneity (Wilde et al. 2000; Ziliak et al. 2003; Ganong and Liebman 2018). We view these papers as complementary to our main findings, but offering less detail than the administrative data and RD design in this paper.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 discusses work requirements in SNAP, the policy variation available, and the administrative data we use. Section 3 documents

[2]In contrast, our analysis is at the individual level, consistent with how work requirements are applied within ABAWD households, and utilizes an RD design. They estimate that work requirements reduce ABAWD participation by 10 to 20 percent, including exits from SNAP that are without employment.

participation survival curves and trends over time, and presents our main regression discontinuity estimates of participation reductions. Section 4 focuses on the population of existing beneficiaries to construct estimates of the effect of work requirements on program retention, assess screening impacts, and study the role of additional verification requirements. Section 5 presents regression discontinuity evidence regarding labor market outcomes, including analyses of heterogeneous impacts along the earnings distribution and a back-of-the-envelope welfare calibration. Section 6 concludes.

2 Setting and Data

2.1 The SNAP Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously called the Food Stamp Program, is among the largest poverty alleviation programs in the United States. In 2015, the program provided over $69 billion in benefits to over 45 million individuals, representing 14 percent of the U.S. population (Ganong and Liebman 2018). The program has been widely studied: researchers have documented the program's impacts on food insecurity (Gundersen et al. 2011, Mabli and Ohls 2014, Gregory et al. 2015, Schmidt et al. 2016), poverty (Short 2015, Tiehen et al. 2015), health and economic outcomes (Almond et al. 2011, Bitler 2015, Gregory and Deb 2015, Hoynes et al. 2016), educational test scores (Gassman-Pines and Bellows 2018), and criminal recidivism (Tuttle 2019).

While the SNAP program primarily uses federal funds and is regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), it is administered by each state individually. The core aspects of the SNAP program are the same across all U.S. states. Each month, households in the program get money loaded onto an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, which they can use to buy most food items at authorized grocery or convenience stores. A household's monthly benefit amount is based on a maximum monthly benefit amount that is set by the federal government for each year and increases with household size. To compute benefit amounts, households first calculate a set of possible deductions (e.g., medical costs, dependent care deduction). Benefits are reduced from their maximum amount by 30 cents for each additional dollar in excess of these deductions.[3] With some exceptions, households are generally deemed ineligible for benefits if their gross income (before deductions) exceeds 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) or if their net income (after deductions) exceeds 100 percent of the FPL. Some states also use a household asset test.

[3]There is a 20 percent earned income deduction. This implies that SNAP benefits effectively decline by 24 cents for each additional dollar of *earned* income.

To keep track of income and deductions, participants in most states are required to submit periodic "recertifications", typically at 6- or 12-month intervals. These verifications require substantial paperwork, including documentation of deductions and earnings (e.g., medical bills or pay stubs), and the majority of attrition from the SNAP program happens at these deadlines (Hastings and Shapiro 2018, Gray 2019, Homonoff and Somerville 2019).

In addition to income limits and periodic recertifications, SNAP imposes two distinct types of work requirements. First, the "general" work requirement dictates that participants aged 16–59, with some exceptions, must complete work registration, accept suitable employment if it is offered, not voluntarily quit a job or reduce hours below 30 hours per week, be willing to report information to the state agency to enable determination of employment status, and comply with an employment and training or workfare program if offered. Second, the "ABAWD" or "time limit" work requirement applies only to able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). ABAWDs are defined as adults aged 18–49 who do *not* report a child in the household and do *not* meet a limited set of exemptions (e.g., a confirmed disability).[4] These individuals must be employed, participate in qualifying job training programs, or do approved community service for at least 80 hours each month. ABAWDs who do not meet these requirements may receive benefits for a maximum of three months within a three-year period. Unless otherwise specified, we use the phrase "work requirements" to refer to these ABAWD work requirements and *not* general work registration requirements.

Some ABAWDs may be exempt from work requirements through one of three channels. First, counties with distressed labor markets according to specific USDA criteria are permitted to waive ABAWD work requirements (Appendix B). Second, states are permitted to exempt up to 15 percent of ABAWDs from work requirements at their discretion, and can save or spend those waivers across different years to a limited extent. Third, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 exempted *all* counties in all states from ABAWD work requirements as part of the Great Recession stimulus package.[5] Individual states began to reinstate work requirements over the subsequent few years. Virginia reinstated ABAWD work requirements statewide on October 1, 2013. A small subset of economically distressed counties were later re-exempted, and are dropped from our main analysis.

[4]See USDA Food and Nutrition Service, "SNAP Work Requirements" May 2019, for more information: `www.fns.usda.gov/snap/work-requirements`.

[5]A few states, including Texas, kept work requirements in place despite the exemption option provided by ARRA: `www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/states-have-requested-waivers-from-snaps-time-limit-in-high-unemployment`. Virginia used the ARRA exemptions as written by USDA.

2.2 Policy Variation in Virginia

The paper relies on variation in SNAP work requirement policies to identify the effects of work requirements. Our main identification strategy takes advantage of program eligibility requirements that change sharply based on age. ABAWD work requirements apply to childless non-exempt adults aged 18–49. In contrast, participants aged 50 or older are not subject to the same time limits on benefits, irrespective of work status. The sharp policy difference between childless adults in their late forties and similar childless adults in their early fifties allows us to use a regression discontinuity (RD) design. Furthermore, we are unaware of other rules within SNAP, TANF, or Medicaid that change discontinuously at age 50 that can confound this identification strategy.[6] Eligibility requirements for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) do loosen at age 50 due to the occupational grids used to determine disability status (Chen and van der Klaauw 2008, Deshpande et al. 2019). In light of this, we check for (and find no evidence of) confounding effects at the age 50 discontinuity by examining data from time periods when work requirements were not in effect.

For supporting evidence, we take advantage of cross-sectional and time series variation in counties that received waivers exempting ABAWDs from the work requirements.[7] Virginia implemented a statewide exemption of the ABAWD work requirements in 2009 as part of the ARRA stimulus package. Virginia then reinstated ABAWD work requirements statewide on October 1, 2013. Starting in May 2014, however, 23 of Virginia's 133 counties were granted county-wide exemptions from work requirements on the basis of high unemployment rates. The paper focuses on the 110 counties in which work requirements remained on after October 2013. Data from the 23 counties reinstating exemptions are used in supporting analyses.

When Virginia implemented the work requirements policy in October 2013, non-compliant ABAWDs were not immediately removed from SNAP. In Virginia, SNAP participants whose participation spell began prior to the reinstatement of work requirements generally had 12-month recertification periods. Importantly, compliance with work requirements was not evaluated until their *next* scheduled recertification after the reinstatement of work requirements. Within this group, those who were not in compliance at this next recertification were given a 6-month period before their subsequent recertification, at which point they would be removed from the program if they were not meeting work requirements. For example, an ABAWD who entered in September 2013 might not make contact with the SNAP office again until they were notified of upcoming

[6] Moreover, childless adults were not eligible for TANF or Medicaid in Virginia during our sample period.

[7] In addition to Virginia's 95 counties, the state classifies 38 independent cities as county-equivalents for Census purposes. For brevity, our description refers to both "true" counties and these 38 cities as counties.

recertification requirements in August 2014. If the participant remained otherwise eligible but was not working, she could be certified for another 6 months. In this case, she would not be removed from SNAP until March 2015.[8] In contrast, newly entering ABAWDs after October 2013 were given 4 to 6 month recertification periods (depending on their month of entry). A 4-month recertification is the standard dictated by USDA policy.[9] Virginia was able to initially and temporarily implement a 6-month recertification policy by using the 15 percent exemptions discussed in Section 2.1 (see Appendix B for more details).[10] In order to accurately capture the impact of work requirements while accounting for this gradual roll-out, our main RD estimates focus on participation and employment at the completion of the roll-out in March 2015, eighteen months after the official reinstatement of work requirements. We provide estimates for a range of other time periods in secondary analyses.

2.3 Administrative Data on SNAP Participation and Earnings

We use annual administrative records from the the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) between 2007 and 2015. The files include data on demographics, disability and employment status, receipt of unearned income, and the first and last calendar months of every SNAP participation spell. Demographics include age in months, gender, education, race, zip code of residence, and county of the participant's SNAP program office.[11] In addition to age, two additional variables are relevant for determining ABAWD status. The first measures the status of general work registration and reasons for any exemption using 21 categorical values. The second measures disability status, also using 21 categorical values, including which disability programs the SNAP participant is enrolled in. Our main specifications consider individuals who have no known exemptions or disabilities and have no children in their SNAP household. These individuals would typically be considered ABAWDs if they are under age 50, and non-ABAWDs if they are over age 50.[12]

[8]Virginia state officials have confirmed that participants were not informed of their work requirements nor their next recertification period in advance of recertification.

[9]These four months are composed of the 3 allotted months of benefits without meeting work requirements within a 3-year window as well as an initial partial month of benefits that does not count towards the 3 allotted months.

[10]The USDA explicitly encouraged states to apply the 15 percent waivers to ABAWDs in order to extend their eligibility periods immediately following the expiry of statewide work requirements exemptions: `https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/FY-2015-ABAWD-Exemptions-Memo-Adjusted-for-Carryover.pdf`.

[11]Not all city-counties have a physical SNAP office located within their borders, but all ordinary counties do. SNAP applicants who apply for SNAP through the wrong program office are still subject to the rules of the county of their residence and their applications are typically either transferred or denied.

[12]To validate this definition in our data, we compare our count of ABAWDs with official counts using external data provided by Virgina DSS that includes a detailed set of codes for ABAWD status and exemptions. The number of ABAWDs in our data is 96.5 percent of the official count, providing confidence

We match these administrative records from DSS to employment records collected by the Virginia Employment Commission as part of the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. These records contain a panel of quarterly earnings from 2005 to 2017. Using the UI records, we define quarterly employment as an indicator for appearing in the wage data that quarter.[13] In analyzing earnings outcomes, we deflate quarterly earnings to 2018Q1 USD using the all-items CPI.

The ability to link SNAP administrative records with administrative earnings histories provides major advantages relative to survey data such as the Current Population Survey (CPS) or the American Communities Survey (ACS). First, we observe the universe of SNAP participants and UI-covered earnings in Virginia. Survey data have been shown to undercount SNAP participants by up to 40 percent (Meyer and Mittag 2019) and to measure income with systematic errors (Bee and Mitchell 2017). Our estimates are therefore less likely to find a false negative due to attenuation bias, side-stepping a common criticism of existing research on work requirements (Rachidi et al. 2019). Second, we have a large sample with detailed geographic information, including geographic areas that are typically censored in survey data due to small cell sizes. These features are crucial for precision in our RD estimates. Finally, we are able to link within-person administrative records spanning more than a decade. We leverage this long panel to construct measures of labor force attachment and to assess impacts across alternative time horizons.

Despite these advantages, the data also have some limitations. First, the SNAP administrative data do not report benefit amounts. Second, UI wage records do not include all workers, and in particular miss self-employed workers, federal employees, and independent contractors.[14] This fact does not threaten the validity of our estimates unless the *composition* of employment changes due to work requirements. For example, our method could under-estimate the impact of work requirements on labor force participation if the policy primarily impacts the transition from non-employment to self-employment. Our results include robustness checks that help to account for sources of employment that are self-reported by SNAP participants and not covered by UI (Appendix Figure A.10).

Table 1 describes the characteristics of Virginia SNAP participants in September 2013 (the last month before the reinstatement of work requirements). We report descriptive statistics separately for adults whom we classify as ABAWDs and adults whom we do not classify as ABAWDs due to either their age, having a dependent, or satisfying a specific

that we are accurately measuring ABAWDs among SNAP participants.

[13]Our results are robust to alternative definitions of employment that we have tested, such as an indicator for earning above the full-time minimum wage.

[14]Self-employed workers comprise about 10 percent of the U.S. workforce. See, for example, Steven Hipple and Laurel Hammond (2016) "Self Employment in the United States."

exemption.[15] In this month, there are 89,507 unique ABAWDs, which represents 9.1 percent of the total beneficiary population. The mean age of ABAWDs is 32.8 years, about ten years younger than other adults. A smaller share of ABAWDs are female (40 percent of ABAWDs vs. 67 percent of other adults), married (7 percent vs. 21 percent), report unearned income to DSS (7 percent vs. 41 percent), or have ever reported a disability in the past (10 percent vs. 35 percent). According to UI records, ABAWDs have slightly lower levels of employment and lower annual wage earnings than other adults on SNAP. Finally, ABAWDs are more likely to be homeless (14 percent vs. 2 percent).

3 Effects on Program Participation

This section estimates the effect of work requirements on total SNAP participation. Section 3.1 documents trends of lower retention and falling total SNAP participation in the wake of work requirements. Section 3.2 then implements RDs to estimate the effect of work requirements on participation. Section 3.3 shows that slow-downs in the flow of new entrants account for a small minority of the total participation drop. Hence, reduced participation is driven primarily by exit among existing participants and shorter spells among new entrants.

3.1 Falling Participation

We begin by showing the acceleration of exit from SNAP when participants are confronted with work requirements. We use wide age ranges for these descriptive analyses, before subsequently focusing on narrower bandwidths around age 50 in the RD. The survival plot in Figure 1a shows the fraction of able-bodied adults who continue to be on SNAP for up to thirteen months after the start of their participation spell. The plot subsets to ABAWDs younger than 50, and adults 50 and older who would meet the criteria for ABAWD if not for their age.[16] We also restrict attention to SNAP participants who first enter after the reinstatement of statewide work requirements between October 2013 and April 2014. For the first six months after entry, none of these participants is required to work in order to continue to receive SNAP benefits. Each month, a small fraction of participants leave SNAP for other reasons (e.g., income rising above the threshold) in equal proportions across the under-50 (dashed line with circles) and 50-and-above (solid line with triangles) groups.

After six months, those under 50 years old must demonstrate that they meet work requirements or be removed from program rolls.[17] While participation survival declines in

[15] We present descriptive statistics of all SNAP households over the entire period of our data in Appendix A.

[16] The under-50 group excludes 49-year olds because they will pass the age-50 cutoff within the year.

[17] In addition, at the six-month mark, both groups have some sort of reporting requirement. Those that

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of SNAP Enrollees in September 2013

	ABAWDs		Non-ABAWD Adults	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age	32.8	9.7	43.1	17.1
Female	0.40	0.49	0.67	0.47
Married	0.07	0.25	0.21	0.41
Household Size	1.3	0.7	2.6	1.6
Homeless	0.14	0.34	0.02	0.14
White	0.42	0.49	0.46	0.50
Black	0.46	0.50	0.42	0.49
Some College+	0.10	0.30	0.12	0.33
Has Earned Income (DSS)	0.17	0.37	0.26	0.44
Has Unearned Income (DSS)	0.07	0.26	0.41	0.49
Avg. Annual Earnings (UI)	3,504	5,769	4,642	8,027
Fraction of Months Employed (UI)	0.32	0.34	0.31	0.39
Ever reported...				
Any Disability	0.10	0.30	0.35	0.48
Exempt from Work Registration	0.39	0.49	0.77	0.42
Exempt Due to Dependent	0.11	0.31	0.32	0.47
Medicaid Recipient	0.44	0.50	0.78	0.41
TANF Recipient	0.12	0.32	0.24	0.43
SNAP E&T Participant	0.16	0.37	0.06	0.25
Moved County	0.33	0.47	0.31	0.46
N	89,507		473,977	

Note: Table reports descriptive statistics of SNAP enrollees from September 2013. The top panel shows demographic data from DSS records, with the exception of the bottom two rows showing earnings and employment from UI records. Some College+ refers to educational attainment of some college or higher (college graduate or advanced degree). The bottom panel reports the fraction of people enrolled in September 2013 who had the designated indicator at any point since the start of the sample period (January 2007).

both groups after six months, the decline among those under 50 is much larger than the the corresponding decline for those 50 or older.[18] By month seven, the surviving fraction of ABAWDs is more than 30 percentage points (over 40 percent) smaller than the surviving fraction of able-bodied adults aged 50 and older. Since the sample consists of SNAP participants who enter the program at different times over the course of several months, the sharp decline we observe among ABAWDs after six months is not explained by a common calendar-time shock.

The sharp drop tracks subsequent policy changes. Figure 1b repeats the survival plot for later program entrants, those newly entering between July 2014 and December 2014, when the under-50 group was required to meet work requirements after only four months rather than after six months.[19] The figure shows a remarkably similar pattern to Figure 1a, with nearly identical survival curves for the under-50 and 50-and-above groups during the first four months, and then a sharp divergence after the under-50 group must meet work requirements. As a placebo test, Appendix Figure A.1 produces corresponding survival curves for the subset of counties that received exemptions from ABAWD work requirements in May 2014. Participation differs little by age when work requirements are not in effect. Taken together, these survival curves strongly suggest that work requirements reduced retention among new ABAWDs by substantial amounts.

Next, we document the magnitude of total participation declines following the reintroduction of work requirements. Figure 2a shows the total monthly participation counts before and after the reinstatement of work requirements (dashed red vertical line), comparing beneficiaries slightly younger than 50 (dashed line) to those 50 and slightly older (solid line). Across age groups, the participation increase that followed the Great Recession began to flatten and decline after 2012. After the reinstatement of work requirements, participation fell sharply among the under-50 group. Participation declines were much slower among those over 50, likely due to the gradual economic recovery.

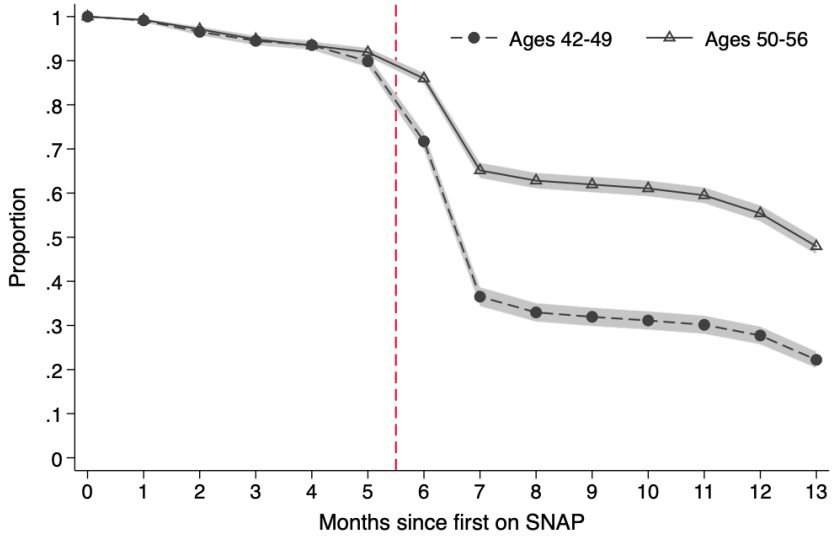
While our main RD identification strategy estimates local average treatment effects for 50-year-old SNAP participants, Figure 2b suggests that the effects we document may be generalizable to a broad range of ages. The figure plots participation counts for 5-year age bins, as a percentage of the corresponding age bin's count in September 2013 (just prior to the

are 50 or older would typically recertify after 12 months but have a lighter reporting requirement midway through their certification period. Those that are under 50 are required to recertify after 6 months.

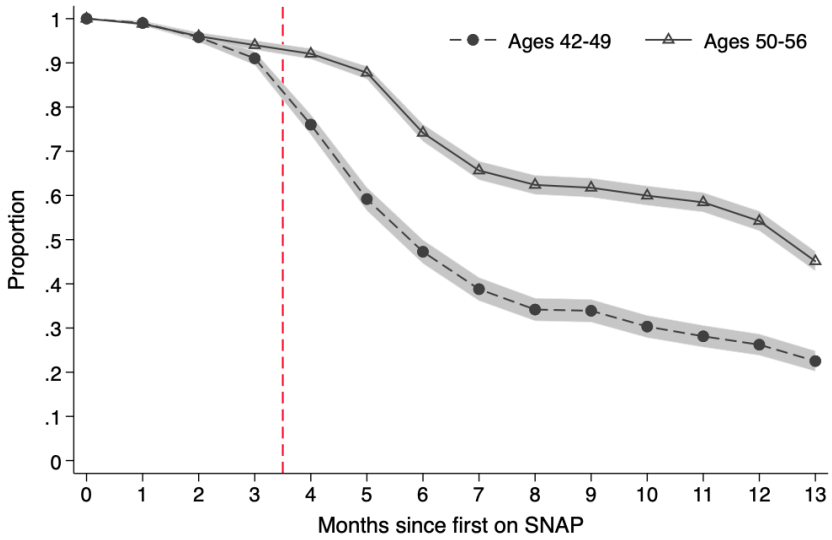
[18]The sharper drop between the months we label as 6 and 7 than between the months we label as 5 and 6 is attributable to imperfect measurement. Because we only observe the month of initial entry, rather than the precise date, some of the participants in the plot do not actually face binding work requirements until the month we label as month 7.

[19]The change from six to four months was a result of Virginia discontinuing use of its 15 percent exemptions, described in Section 2, in October 2014.

Figure 1: SNAP Participation Survival by Work Requirements Status



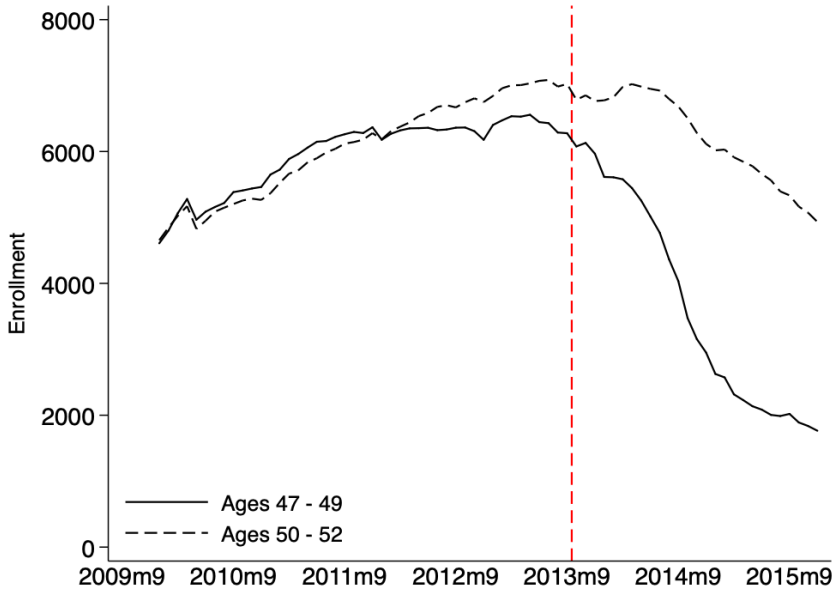
(a) Participants With Six-Month Recertification Periods



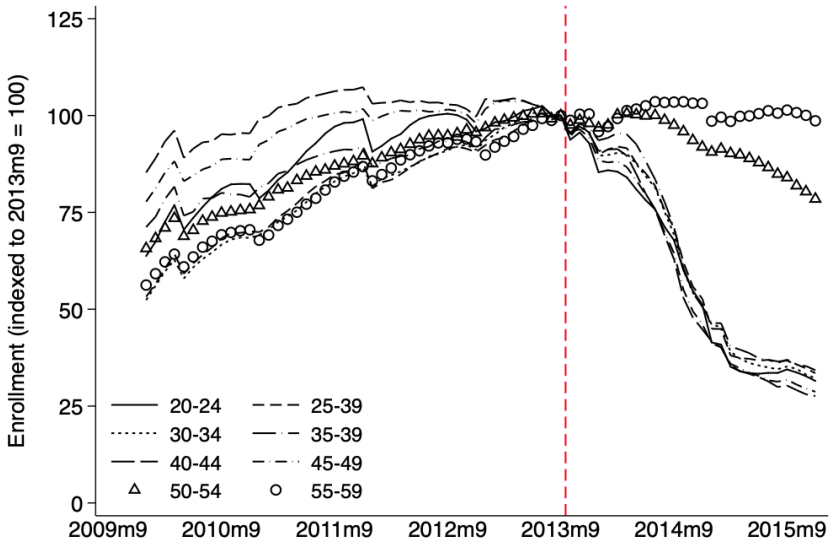
(b) Participants With Four-Month Recertification Periods

Notes: Figure plots participation survival for ABAWDs aged 42–49 and able-bodied adults without dependents or disabilities aged 50–56 in counties with active work requirements, and who have not had a SNAP spell earlier in our sample period. Work requirements apply to ABAWDs (dashed line), who are required to start meeting them six months (top panel) or four months (bottom panel) after initial entry (dashed red vertical line) in order to continue to receive SNAP benefits. The top panel plots participation survival for participants whose SNAP spells begin between October 2013 and April 2014, prior to the change from six months to four months. The bottom panel plots it for those whose SNAP spells begin between July 2014 and December 2014, after the change to four months is fully in effect.

Figure 2: Total Participation Around Work Requirements



(a) Total Participation Counts (Raw)



(b) Total Participation Counts (Normalized), By Age Group

Notes: Plots of monthly total participation counts in Virginia, for adults in the specified age ranges who would meet the definition for ABAWD if age were ignored. The dashed red vertical line corresponds to the end of the statewide ARRA exemptions from work requirements in September 2013. Top panel plots raw counts for age groups immediately surrounding age 50. Bottom panel plots counts for a wider range of age groups, normalized to within-group participation in September 2013.

reinstatement of work requirements). While the groups aged 50 and above experience slow and heterogeneous declines in participation, all age ranges from 20 to 49 experience nearly identical relative declines in participation. The patterns in Figure 2b therefore suggest that the impact of work requirements likely does not vary dramatically across the age distribution.

3.2 Estimates of Total Participation Impact

Section 3.1 shows that SNAP participation dropped differentially among participants subject to work requirements when work requirements were reinstated. However, potential underlying differences between the under-50 and 50-and-above groups in the figure make it difficult to draw conclusions about the portion of the differential drop, if any, that is *caused* by work requirements. To obtain a credible point estimate for the causal impact of work requirements on total participation, we exploit the sharp discontinuity in ABAWD classification at age 50 using a regression discontinuity framework.

We first estimate the impact of work requirements on total participation counts for the entire state of Virginia. Our preferred RD specification is a local linear model, with age (the running variable) centered around 50:[20]

$$Y_a = \alpha + \beta \cdot U50_a + \gamma \cdot (age_a - 50) + \delta \cdot U50_a \cdot (age_a - 50) + \varepsilon_a \tag{1}$$

where Y_a is the count of participants aged a, incremented in months. The variable $U50_a$ is an indicator for whether age a is strictly below 50, and therefore marks the age range where work requirements apply. The coefficient of interest is β, which measures the jump in the regression function at the discontinuity.[21]

The primary specification estimates the model for participation counts eighteen months after the reinstatement of work requirements. This allows enough time to capture the entirety of the gradual roll-out of work requirements (described in Section 2.2). In evaluating outcomes at eighteen months, we exclude a donut of SNAP participants who are older than 48.5 and younger than 50 as of September 2013. As shown in Figure 3a, these participants cross the work requirements age cutoff between September 2013 and the period when outcomes are measured, and are therefore only partially exposed to work requirements. This age-out during the period between the policy change and the outcome measurement motivates the donut RD approach used throughout the paper. In order to avoid ad hoc bandwidth selection for the RDs, we follow the systematic procedure of

[20]We follow Gelman and Imbens (2017) in using low-order polynomial specifications. Appendix A checks robustness to alternative specifications.

[21]Participation counts include only the 110 counties in which work requirements remain on after their reinstatement; the 23 counties that later regain exemptions are excluded.

Calonico et al. (2014) to select (potentially asymmetric) optimal bandwidths. Appendix Figure A.7 suggests that our conclusions remain similar over a wide range of bandwidths.

Figure 3b displays the results of the total participation RD. The regression is estimated using granular one-month age bins. The sharp positive increase in participation at age 50 suggests that, eighteen months after reinstatement, work requirements reduce total ABAWD participation by 52 percent. This drop is calculated as the reduction within each monthly age bin (108 participants), compared to the number of participants at age 50 (205 participants).

Appendix Figure A.2 provides further evidence that the participation reduction is caused by work requirements. The figure shows the total participation RDs estimated at earlier periods: 12 months before the reinstatement of work requirements, the month that work requirements were reinstated, and 12 months after the reinstatement of work requirements. In each RD, we define the excluded donut to correspond to those participants whose exposure to work requirements changes between the estimation period and the post-ARRA reintroduction of work requirements.[22] The periods before and at the reinstatement serve as placebo checks: participation on either side of the age 50 threshold is nearly identical, suggesting that the jump in Figure 3b is *not* attributable to discontinuities at age 50 that are present when work requirements are absent. The period 12 months after the reinstatement of work requirements shows a similar pattern to Figure 3b, but the participation drop below age 50 is smaller, consistent with the gradual roll-out of the policy. To verify robustness, Appendix Figure A.3 plots the RD estimates for a wide array of time horizons using linear and quadratic specifications.

3.3 Retention vs. Deterrence

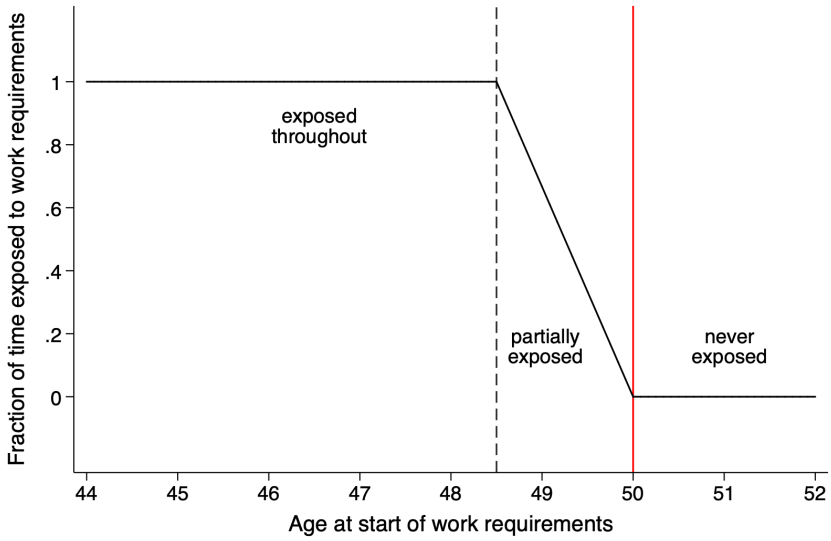
Sections 3.1 and 3.2 provide compelling evidence of a causal effect of work requirements on total SNAP participation. This section conceptually clarifies how this decline may occur through three distinct channels:

1. Deterrence of potential new enrollees.
2. Decreased retention among new enrollees.
3. Decreased retention among existing participants.

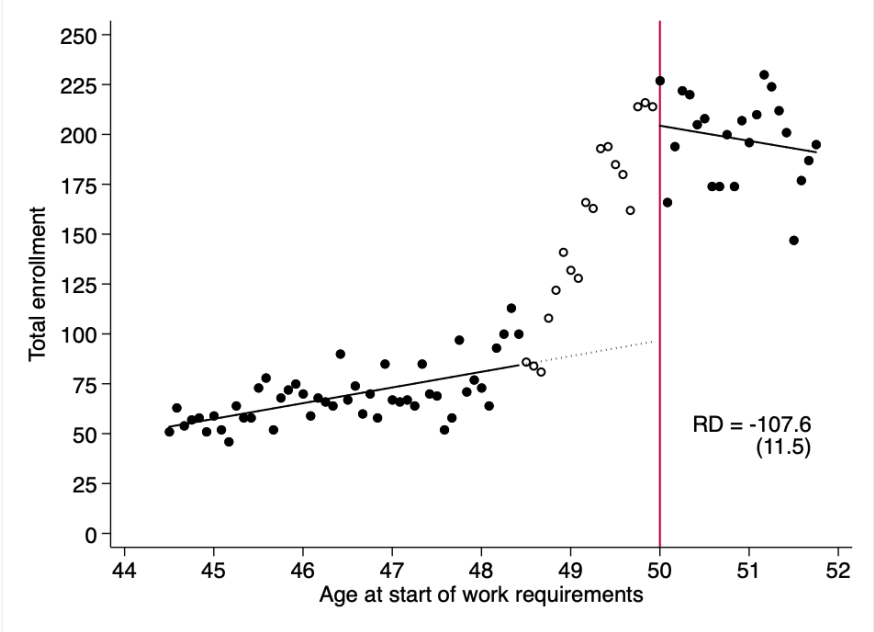
We perform a series of rough exercises to approximate the relative magnitude of each channel in explaining the overall participation decline. Note that Figure 3b estimates a missing mass of 108 beneficiaries per monthly age bin just below age 50.

[22]The earlier periods do not require a donut; the period 12 months after the reinstatement of work requirements requires a one-year age donut.

Figure 3: Exposure to Work Requirements and RD Estimate of Total Participation



(a) Exposure to Work Requirements by Age at Start of Work Requirements



(b) RD Estimate of Total SNAP Participation, 18 Months After Work Requirements

Notes: Top panel shows the fraction of time that SNAP participants are subject to work requirements during the 18 months immediately following the reintroduction of work requirements. Work requirements abruptly cease to apply at age 50. Participants whose age when work requirements start is between 48.5 and 50 fall into the "donut" of those who age out by the time outcomes are measured (18 months after the reintroduction of work requirements). Bottom panel displays the RD results for total SNAP participation 18 months after work requirements were reinstated in Virginia. The scatter plot shows total participant counts by age in quarters, and the lines show a linear regression fit on both sides of the eligibility threshold. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The sample consists of the subset of counties for which work requirements remain on after October 2013.

Two different exercises suggest that the first channel—deterrence of potential new enrollees—appears to explain only a small fraction of the total enrollment decline. First, Figure 4 plots monthly new entrant counts. There is no clear trend break in the flow of new entrants following the reintroduction of statewide work requirements. Instead, the flow of new entrants under 50 decreases at a steady rate starting in 2011. Alternatively, we estimate (noisy) RDs of total new enrollment in each month from October 2013 through March 2015, and sum the corresponding enrollment drops together. Appendix Figure A.4 shows these coefficients. The coefficients sum to −18, suggesting that new enrollment deterrence can only explain less than 17 percent (18/108) of the total enrollment decline.

Figure 4: New SNAP Entry Around Work Requirements



Notes: Plot of monthly counts of new entrants in Virginia, for adults in the specified age ranges who would meet the definition for ABAWD if age were ignored. Points represent month-deseasonalized, mean-preserving new entrant counts. The dashed red vertical line corresponds to the end of the statewide ARRA exemptions from work requirements in September 2013.

The second channel—decreased retention among new enrollees—is difficult to estimate credibly given the possible selection of unobservably different beneficiaries into the program over time. As a very rough approximation, we estimate the loss in retention among new enrollees by estimating separate RDs around age 50 for each subsequent monthly cohort of new entrants after September 2013.[23] Point estimates are shown in Appendix Figure A.5. Multiplying each coefficient by the number of new 50-year-old enrollees in each month yields

[23]We adjust the donut in each RD to exclude those under 50 who turn 50 before March 2015.

a sum of −16, also suggesting a modest role for new beneficiary retention of around 15 percent (16/108).

Finally, we multiply the number of 50 year olds on the program in September 2013 (214) by the retention effect calculated later in the paper (−0.238) and conclude that 51 participating individuals per monthly age bin left due to work requirements. This suggests that retention among new enrollees can explain 47 percent (51/108) of the total enrollment decline.

These exercises are imperfect but are nonetheless useful. Namely, they provide evidence that deterrence is *not* the primary driver of enrollment declines. Instead, retention of existing beneficiaries appears to be the most important channel in total enrollment declines.

4 Effects on Participant Exit

This section estimates the effect of introducing work requirements on the retention of existing beneficiaries. The regressions are estimated on our "stock" population of childless adults who were participating in SNAP as of September 2013, just before the reinstatement of work requirements. The stock population has three attractive features. First, it defines the sample prior to the reinstatement of work requirements, thereby avoiding selection issues arising from nonrandom work requirement-induced deterrence of entry into SNAP. Second, it better limits the analyzed population to those that are likely to be impacted by SNAP policy changes, in comparison to studies that use survey data. Third, it allows us to study the heterogeneity of work requirements using individuals' ex ante characteristics (that are mostly collected only if individuals enroll in SNAP). We only include individuals from the counties in which work requirements remained in force for two or more years after their reinstatement, which covers 70.7 percent of the full stock sample. This sample definition allows us to measure outcomes for all participants after the same elapsed time since the reinstatement of work requirements. This is our main sample for the remainder of the paper.

As before, our preferred RD specification is a local linear model, with age centered around 50:[24]

$$1(Enrolled)_i = \alpha + \beta \cdot U50_i + \gamma \cdot (age_i - 50) + \delta \cdot U50_i \cdot (age_i - 50) + \eta \cdot X_i + \varepsilon_i \qquad (2)$$

$1(Enrolled)_i$ is our outcome of interest for individual i in a predetermined future month. The vector X_i includes a handful of individual-level controls to increase precision; point

[24]We follow Gelman and Imbens (2017) in using low-order polynomial specifications. Appendix A checks robustness to alternative specifications.

estimates are very similar with or without controls.[25] The coefficient of interest is β, which measures the jump in the regression function at the discontinuity. We begin by running these regressions on our stock sample of SNAP participants who were enrolled as of September 2013, when the statewide exemption was still in effect, and examine outcomes after the October 2013 reinstatement of work requirements.

As before, our main specifications measure participation eighteen months after work requirements resume (March 2015), with an excluded donut of SNAP participants who are only partially exposed to work requirements between September 2013 and March 2015 (see Figure 3a). Standard errors are clustered by monthly age (the discrete running variable). Again, our main results use MSE-optimal bandwidths determined by the method in Calonico et al. (2014).

4.1 Identification Assumptions

The identification assumptions for these RD regressions of participant exit are analogous to the assumptions required for the labor market outcomes RD regressions in Section 5. We therefore discuss both together here. The key identification assumption of the RD is that the potential outcomes are smooth at the age 50 cutoff in the absence of the treatment.

We perform a battery of checks to validate the research design. First, we test for balance in covariates at the discontinuity by replacing $1(Enrolled)_i$ with each of our demographic controls. Table 2 shows there are rarely differences across the threshold: the magnitudes of the differences are generally small and only 1 of 17 is statistically significant. Second, we verify that the density of the age distribution is smooth at the discontinuity. Appendix Figure A.8 shows there is no visual evidence of sorting around the cutoff. We fail to reject the null hypothesis of continuity in the density at age 50 based on the manipulation tests in Frandsen (2017), which adapts the standard density tests for a discrete running variable (McCrary 2008, Cattaneo et al. 2018). Finally, we re-estimate the RDs using as a placebo the ARRA time period when work requirements were not in effect for any group (Figure 5b). These checks support the identifying assumptions required for the validity of the research design.

[25]The baseline specification includes indicators for female, married, homelessness, any earned income, any unearned income, and some college according to DSS records. It also includes categorical variables for race and linear controls for case size from the SNAP records, pre-period wage earnings, and the fraction of months with employment in the pre-period from the UI records. The pre-period in this case includes all data back to the beginning of our sample window (January 2007). Other controls are taken as snapshots in September 2013.

Table 2: Covariate Balance in RD

	Discontinuity	S.E.	Control Mean	% diff	N
Female	0.020	0.026	0.457	4.5	8,123
White	-0.009	0.025	0.409	-2.1	7,902
Black	-0.004	0.026	0.519	-0.8	7,409
Married	0.035	0.014	0.075	46.7	9,385
Household Size	-0.006	0.029	1.284	-0.5	7,554
Household Head	-0.006	0.009	0.941	-0.7	7,308
Homeless	-0.007	0.018	0.147	-4.8	8,350
High School	0.018	0.024	0.541	3.3	9,000
Some College or Higher	-0.015	0.015	0.098	-15.4	9,541
Has Earned Income	-0.011	0.012	0.186	-6.0	8,131
Has Unearned Income	0.013	0.012	0.087	15.2	10,332
Earned or Unearned Income	-0.004	0.014	0.266	-1.4	9,570
Fraction of Months Employed (7yr avg)	0.008	0.011	0.311	2.6	7,369
Avg. Annual Earnings (7yr avg)	298.432	194.442	4466.207	6.7	9,800
Fraction of Months Employed (3yr avg)	-0.001	0.013	0.288	-0.5	6,480
Avg. Annual Earnings (3yr avg)	298.790	221.707	3635.817	8.2	8,908
Unemployment Rate	0.041	0.064	7.394	0.6	8,738

Notes: Table presents balance tests of covariates at SNAP enrollment using our "stock" sample. Each row corresponds to a separate regression with that characteristic as the dependent variable. The discontinuity measures the jump in the regression function at age 50. Standard errors are clustered by monthly age (the running variable). The Control Mean denotes the mean of that characteristic immediately to the right of age 50. Each regression uses MSE-optimal bandwidths calculated separately for each side of the cutoff and for each outcome, and a uniform kernel to weight observations. Sample sizes vary depending on the bandwidth used.

4.2 Estimates of Participant Exit

Figure 5a displays our main RD results. The figure displays a fitted regression as well as average retention percentages, which are collapsed to quarters to improve clarity. The sharp positive increase in participation at age 50 suggests that work requirements reduce ABAWD participation by a statistically significant 24 percentage points. This represents a 38 percent decline from the mean among participants aged 50.[26] As further evidence that this decline is a result of work requirements, Figure 5b replicates the specification using data from the statewide ARRA exemption period between 2011 and 2013, when all participants were exempt from work requirements. This placebo regression uses an analogous "stock" sample of participants enrolled in September 2011 and measures outcomes in March 2013, matching the calendar months of our main stock sample to address seasonality. There is no statistically or economically significant difference in participation across the age 50 cutoff during this placebo period.

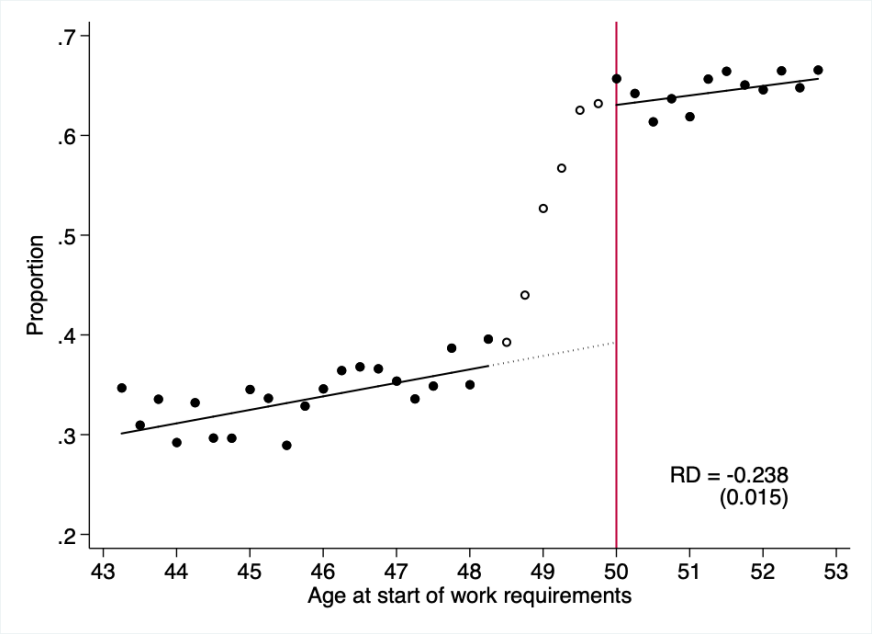
Appendix Figure A.6 traces out the RD results for participation where outcomes are measured at alternative time periods, ranging from 1 to 27 months following the reinstatement of work requirements. The effect begins to appear in the seventh month after work requirements resume, which is the first month that we should expect SNAP participants to be disenrolled if they are not meeting the requirements. The participation drop reaches 24 percentage points within roughly eighteen months and then remains at that level, consistent with the disenrollment schedule described in Section 2.2.

Program exit due to work requirement policy can occur through at least two distinct channels, which we decompose here. First, SNAP participants may exit as a result of failure or unwillingness to work or perform other qualifying activities. Second, participants may exit due to a more demanding recertification schedule, given the 4- to 6-month grace period associated with Virginia's policy. We can isolate the first channel by looking only at a subset of stock population participants who share the same recertification burdens regardless of age. Specifically, all participants under 50 must complete two recertifications in the 18 months between September 2013 and March 2015. Participants 50 and older with initial enrollment between October and March also face two recertifications over this period. Yet participants over 50 whose enrollment spells began between April and September must only complete *one* recertification in the 18 months following September 2013. This variation in recertification requirements by month applies irrespective of the year in which the enrollment spell begins.[27]

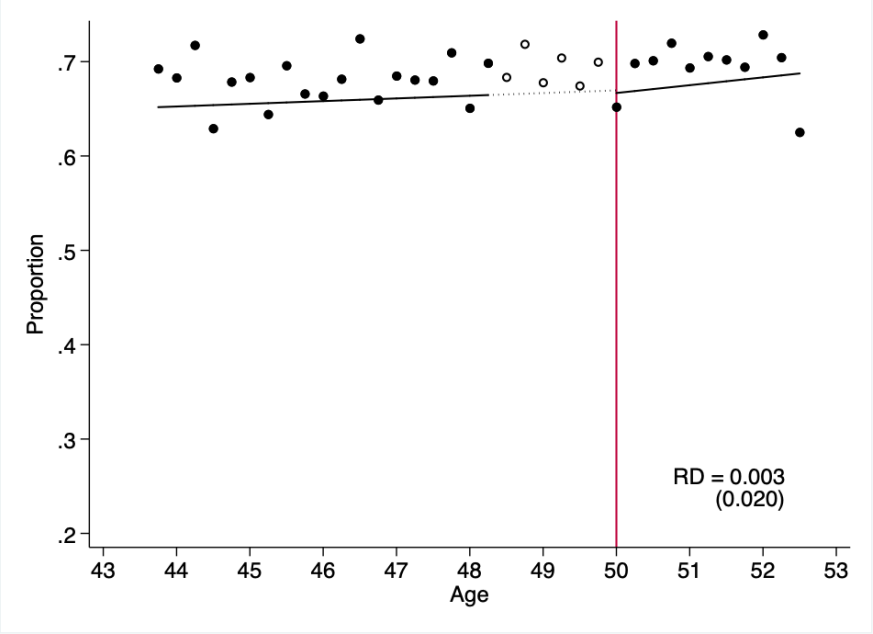
[26] Recall that there is some natural attrition in participation, as shown in Figure 1a.

[27] To better understand this variation, consider two 50-year-old non-working beneficiaries with recertifications due in March and April, respectively. The March recertifier must submit paperwork in March 2014 and March 2015 while the April recertifier must submit paperwork in April 2014 and April 2015, which is 1 month past the 18-month window. By the time we assess retention in March 2015, the March

Figure 5: RD Estimates of SNAP Retention, 18 Months After Work Requirements



(a) Participation During Work Requirements



(b) Placebo Test: Participation During ARRA Exemptions

Notes: Panel (a) visually displays the RD results for SNAP participation after eighteen months of work requirements. The scatter plot shows covariate-adjusted means by age in quarters, and the lines show a linear regression fit in months on both sides of the eligibility threshold. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The sample consists of work-registered individuals on SNAP in September 2013 and in the subset of counties for which work requirements remain on after October 2013. As a placebo test, Panel (b) replicates the analysis among those enrolled in September 2011 and measures enrollment in March 2013, over which period no work requirements were in effect.

To only compare participants with two recertifications, Appendix Figure A.9 shows the RD estimate only for those in the stock population who have scheduled recertifications in the months of September 2013 through March 2015. The RD estimate of 26.4 percentage points is not statistically distinguishable from the main estimate of 23.8 percentage points in this section. This confirms that the failure to meet work requirements, and not the extra recertification associated with work requirements in Virginia, is the primary driver of our results.

4.3 Heterogeneous and Screening Effects of Work Requirements

Section 4.2 documents that work requirements lead to substantial exit from SNAP. This section examines *who* exits from SNAP as a result of work requirements using two alternative measures. The first assesses how the *sensitivity* of participants to work requirements varies across participants with differing characteristics. The second examines how work requirements impact the overall *composition* of SNAP participants.

First, to assess whether participants with certain characteristics are more sensitive to work requirements, we fully interact the standard RD specification with an indicator for observable binary characteristic x:

$$\begin{aligned} 1(Enrolled)_i = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 x_i + \beta_1 U50_i + \beta_2 U50_i \cdot x_i + \gamma_1(age_i - 50) + \gamma_2(age_i - 50) \cdot x_i \\ + \delta_1(age_i - 50) \cdot U50_i + \delta_2(age_i - 50) \cdot U50 \cdot x_i + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where $1(Enrolled)_i$ represents participation in SNAP of individual i from our stock population eighteen months after the reinstatement of work requirements. Observable characteristics x include several of the demographic variables previously introduced in the text, variables indicating above median time spent on SNAP (either over the lifetime of individuals as captured in our data or in their most recent spells). To create a single measure of how these different characteristics map to earnings, we predict earnings from a regression of 2013Q3 earnings against these variables. We include an indicator for being above the median of predicted earnings as a summary metric of economic vulnerability. As in previous specifications, α_1 estimates the SNAP program eighteen-month retention rate for those *without* characteristic x. β_1 estimates the corresponding impact of work requirements on this retention rate in percentage points. The new coefficient β_2 estimates how much larger the discontinuity is for those with a given characteristic ($x_i = 1$), as a

recertifier must have submitted two rounds of paperwork, while the April recertifier must have submitted one.

percent of all members of the "stock" population with that characteristic.

However, certain characteristics may correlate with higher or lower retention even absent work requirements, making the intuitive meaning of β_2 less clear. In order to construct more meaningful parameters, we scale the effect of work requirements on retention among those with $x_i = 0$ by the baseline retention rate absent work requirements $\left(\frac{\beta_1}{\alpha_1}\right)$. We then perform the analogous scaling for those with $x_i = 1$ $\left(\frac{\beta_1 + \beta_2}{\alpha_1 + \alpha_2}\right)$. These numbers capture the fraction of participants who left the program due to work requirements out of those who *would have* been on the program absent work requirements. They therefore have a more intuitive interpretation as the sensitivity of participants to work requirements.

Estimates of β_2, $\left(\frac{\beta_1}{\alpha_1}\right)$ and $\left(\frac{\beta_1 + \beta_2}{\alpha_1 + \alpha_2}\right)$ are reported in columns 1, 2 and 3 of Table 3, respectively. Each row in Table 3 refers to estimates from a separate regression corresponding to a different characteristic x. We use the delta method to evaluate whether $\left(\frac{\beta_1}{\alpha_1}\right)$ and $\left(\frac{\beta_1 + \beta_2}{\alpha_1 + \alpha_2}\right)$ are statistically different, and report the p-value in column 4. Greater sensitivity to work requirements among the group with characteristic x in comparison to the group without characteristic x is indicated by a negative and statistically significant estimate of β_2 (column 1) or a larger negative value of $\left(\frac{\beta_1 + \beta_2}{\alpha_1 + \alpha_2}\right)$ (column 3) compared to $\left(\frac{\beta_1}{\alpha_1}\right)$ (column 2) and a statistically significant p-value (column 4). We find that work requirements have disproportionately larger impacts on participants who are homeless and participants without earned or unearned income at the time of their SNAP application. On the other hand, those who have a history of reporting a disability are less likely to be impacted by work requirements. This group may be more likely to be reclassified as exempt from work requirements due to not meeting the definition for able-bodied (see subsection 5.1). Overall, we find that those with lower baseline predicted earnings based on their characteristics are disproportionately impacted by work requirements.

Our second screening method measures how the composition of retained participants is affected by work requirements. This measure captures changes due to work requirements in the characteristics of the population of SNAP participants, rather than the differential group-specific exit sensitivities captured by our first measure. Results from this measure may differ from those using the first measure when the number of people with a given characteristic is small. In this case, even large sensitivities may translate to very small compositional changes in the pool of SNAP participants. To operationalize the compositional measure, we ask which observable characteristics are disproportionately represented among retained participants under work requirements relative to the counterfactual without work requirements. Table 4 reports estimates from RD regressions on the proportion of cases with

Table 3: Sensitivity RD, 18 Months After Work Requirements

	β_2	β_1/α_1	$\frac{(\beta_1+\beta_2)}{(\alpha_1+\alpha_2)}$	p-value of difference
Above Median Predicted Earnings	0.067	-0.418	-0.356	0.097
	(0.028)			
Female	0.069	-0.456	-0.329	0.007
	(0.036)			
Married	0.065	-0.404	-0.316	0.315
	(0.060)			
Homeless	-0.142	-0.365	-0.566	0.001
	(0.041)			
White	0.036	-0.415	-0.366	0.244
	(0.027)			
Black	-0.050	-0.378	-0.418	0.426
	(0.035)			
Some College+	0.005	-0.393	-0.433	0.607
	(0.054)			
Has Earned Income	0.103	-0.422	-0.272	0.006
	(0.037)			
Has Unearned Income	0.098	-0.409	-0.263	0.071
	(0.058)			
Ever Before UI Recipient	0.042	-0.403	-0.369	0.568
	(0.046)			
Ever Before Disability	0.213	-0.487	-0.103	0.000
	(0.039)			
Above Median Unemployment Rate	-0.020	-0.394	-0.400	0.882
	(0.030)			
Above Median Previous Time on SNAP	-0.079	-0.399	-0.400	0.980
	(0.033)			
Above Median Previous SNAP Spell	-0.110	-0.361	-0.412	0.286
	(0.032)			

Notes: Table presents RD estimates of Equation 3. Each row presents results from a separate regression corresponding to the characteristic listed. $N = 17{,}438$. Separate MSE-optimal bandwidths calculated on each side of the donut. The column β_2 presents the differential jump at age 50 for people with the characteristic relative to those without. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The second column reports the retention of people without the characteristic, calculated as β_1/α_1. The third column reports retention for those with the characteristic, calculated as $(\beta_1+\beta_2)/(\alpha+\alpha_2)$. The p-value from the test that columns 2 and 3 are equal is reported in the last column, calculated using the delta method.

characteristics x among the set of all cases that remain on SNAP in March 2015:

$$x_i = \alpha_1 + \theta_1 U50_i + \gamma_1(age_i - 50) + \gamma_2(age_i - 50) \cdot U50_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{4}$$

In this regression, the coefficient of interest is θ_1, which represents the change in composition of retained cases across the age 50 cutoff. Table 4 shows that, similar to the findings in Table 3, work requirements reduce the proportion of homeless individuals, individuals with no earned income and individuals with below median predicted earnings among those that remain on SNAP. Also similarly to the findings in Table 3, work requirements cause a greater proportion of those who remain on SNAP to be composed of those who have a documented history of having a disability. Overall, the results suggest that work requirements disproportionately impact beneficiaries with characteristics suggesting greater economic vulnerability but are able to disproportionately exempt those with a history of disability.

5 Effects on Labor Market Outcomes

This section estimates the effect of work requirements on individual-level labor market outcomes using the stock population and regression specification described in Section 4. We first present estimates of the effects on employment, wage earnings, and other labor market outcomes. We then conduct robustness checks for both the employment and earnings estimates. Finally, we estimate RDs on quantiles of the earnings distribution to examine heterogeneity in the labor market impacts of work requirements.

5.1 Estimates of Labor Market Effects

Section 3.2 documents the large participation drops due to work requirements. In contrast, this section shows that the average effects on employment and earnings are not statistically different from zero. Figure 6 shows the RD results for with an indicator for employment on the left-hand side, defined as having any UI-covered earnings six quarters after work requirements were reinstated. We fail to detect a statistically significant impact of work requirements on employment on average, and we statistically reject employment increases larger than 2.0 percentage points. To test robustness, Appendix Figure A.10 defines the dependent variable as the union of having a wage in the UI data or reporting earned income to the SNAP agency. This allows us to capture possible effects on self-employment,

Table 4: Screening RD by Subgroup, 18 Months After Work Requirements

	Discontinuity	SE	Control Mean	% Diff
Above Median Predicted Earnings	0.048	0.025	0.348	13.8
Female	0.056	0.036	0.462	12.2
Married	0.025	0.019	0.100	24.6
Homeless	-0.040	0.017	0.146	-27.7
White	0.003	0.026	0.401	0.7
Black	-0.004	0.031	0.456	-0.9
Some College+	-0.031	0.020	0.099	-31.7
Has Earned Income	0.050	0.015	0.157	32.0
Has Unearned Income	0.022	0.016	0.087	25.1
Ever Before UI Recipient	0.003	0.021	0.214	1.3
Ever Before Disability	0.161	0.024	0.173	92.8
Above Median Unemployment Rate	-0.032	0.034	0.422	-7.5
Above Median Previous Time on SNAP	0.008	0.032	0.620	1.2
Above Median Previous SNAP Spell	-0.001	0.030	0.651	-0.1

Notes: Table presents RD estimates of Equation 4. Each row presents results from a separate regression corresponding to the characteristic listed. The first column presents the estimate on the indicator for under 50. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses are presented in the second column. The third column presents the percentage of 50-year olds who exited SNAP by March 2015 and have the characteristic listed as of September 2013. The last column presents the discontinuity as a percentage of the control mean. The unemployment rate is measured as the county average of the period between October 2013 and March 2015.

under the assumption that work requirements only induce additional self-employment if the affected individuals remain on SNAP. The point estimates are nearly identical and still not statistically different from zero.

A potential explanation for this null result is that many SNAP participants have very low labor force attachment, making employment responses unlikely and diluting the average estimate. We further investigate this null result in Appendix Table A.2, which shows our primary specification using individuals with greater or lesser labor force attachment. To measure labor force attachment, we predict UI-covered employment in 2013Q3 with LASSO regression, using a large set of demographic covariates.[28] In predicting employment probabilities, we randomly divide the sample into fifths and use data from four-fifths to fit a model to predict employment in the remaining fifth. Work requirements do not clearly increase UI-covered employment even for individuals with moderate or strong pre-existing attachment to the labor force.

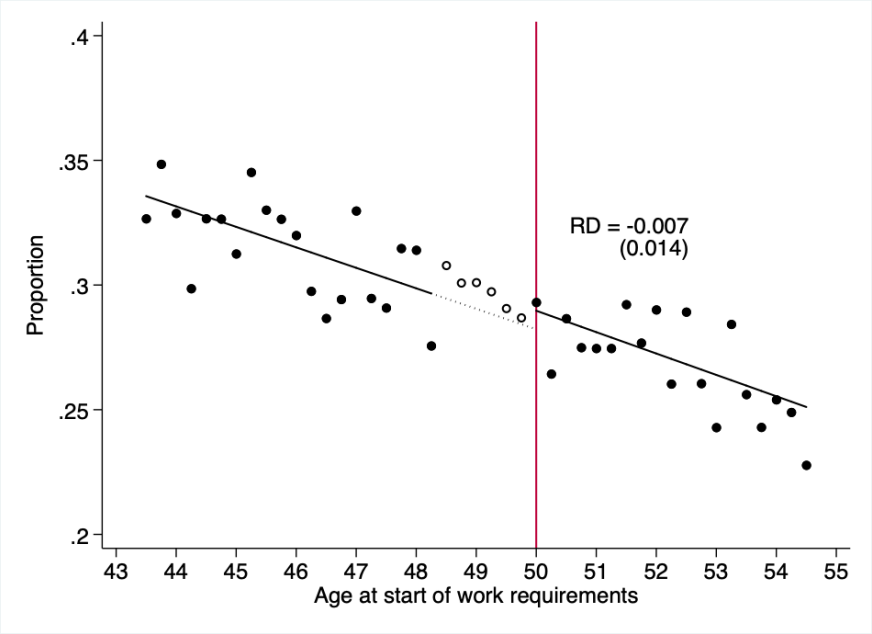
We then assess whether UI-covered earnings change at the age 50 cutoff. Figure 7a shows no statistically significant impact on average earnings. However, the estimate is somewhat imprecise, and we are unable to statistically rule out increases of up to $31 per month. Appendix Figure A.11a shows qualitatively similar results for log earnings. We also find imprecise estimates by different levels of labor force attachment, as shown in Appendix Table A.2.

As a notable aside, Appendix Figure A.12 defines the dependent variable as an indicator for whether the participant remained on SNAP with a known exemption (other than an age-based exemption). This captures the extent to which ABAWDs were able to claim new exemptions (e.g., disability) or alter their household structure (e.g., by claiming new dependents) in response to work requirements. There does appear to be some impact: an additional 5.7 percent of the stock sample is able to stay on the program by claiming a new exemption. However, this magnitude is small relative to the 24 percent of the stock sample who lose benefits as a result of work requirements.

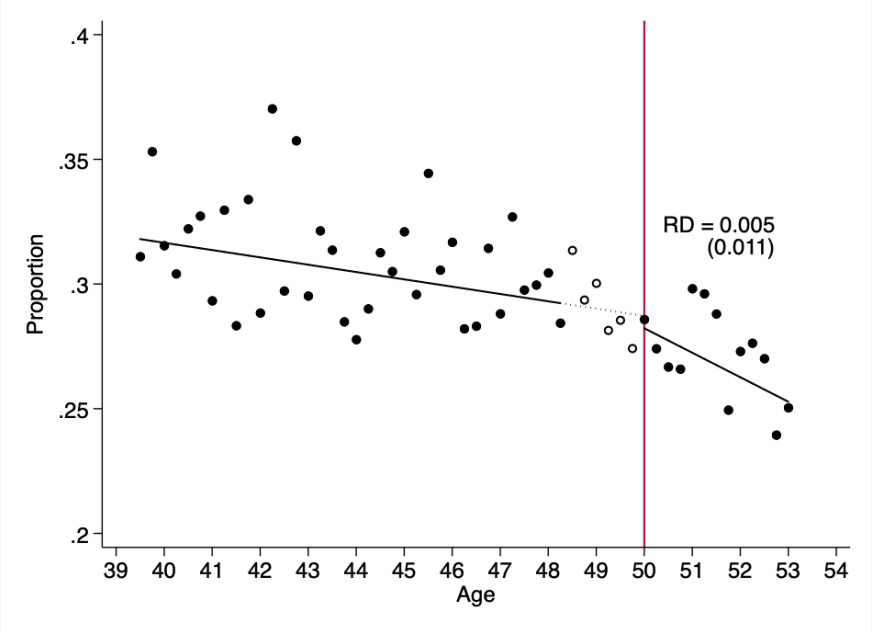
Table 5 collects the point estimates and standard errors from these specifications. Below the coefficient estimates, we report the mean of each corresponding outcome variable at age 50 (immediately to the right of the RD threshold). For the two outcomes where we find statistically significant effects in our main stock sample, the estimate from the placebo period is a precisely estimated zero. Overall, the findings suggest that work requirements do not

[28]Specifically, we use data-dependent penalization methods based on Belloni et al. (2012). The regression includes the following controls to predict employment: indicators for yearly age, indicators for earnings in each month of the previous 7 years prior to Sept. 2013, household size, and indicators for gender, married, private living arrangement, white, black, some college or higher education, reporting earned income on the SNAP application, and reporting unearned income on the SNAP application.

Figure 6: RD Estimates of Employment, 18 Months After Work Requirements



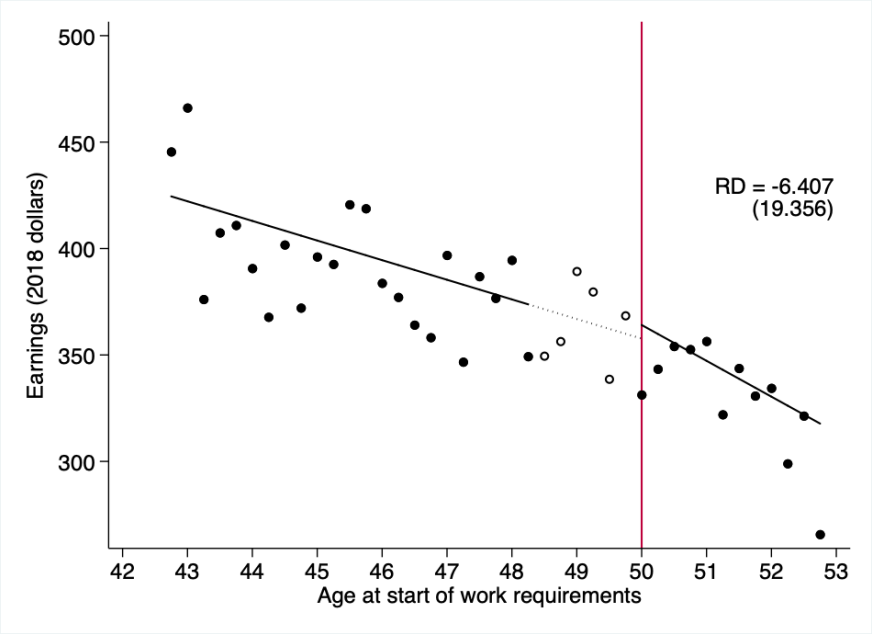
(a) Employment During Work Requirements



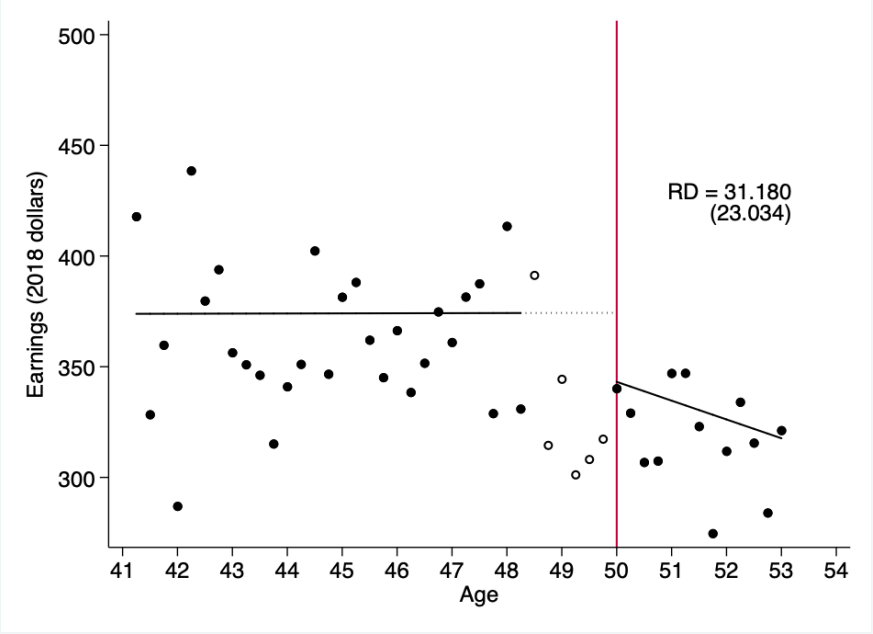
(b) Placebo Test: Employment During ARRA Exemptions

Notes: Panel (a) visually displays the RD results for employment after eighteen months of work requirements. The scatter plot shows covariate-adjusted means by age in quarters, and the lines show a linear regression fit in months on both sides of the eligibility threshold. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The sample consists of work-registered individuals on SNAP in September 2013 and in the subset of counties where work requirements remain on after October 2013. Panel (b) replicates the same analysis among those enrolled in September 2011, when the ARRA exemption that suspended work requirements was in effect for an additional two years.

Figure 7: RD Estimates of Earnings, 18 Months After Work Requirements



(a) Earnings During Work Requirements



(b) Placebo Test: Earnings During ARRA Exemptions

Notes: Panel (a) visually displays the RD results for earnings (including zeros) after eighteen months of work requirements. Earnings are top-coded at the 99th percentile within yearly age bins for each calendar month. The scatter plot shows covariate-adjusted means by age in quarters, and the lines show a linear regression fit in months on both sides of the eligibility threshold. The sample consists of work-registered individuals on SNAP in September 2013 and in the subset of counties where work requirements remain on after October 2013. Panel (b) replicates the same analysis among those participating in September 2011, when the ARRA exemption that suspended work requirements was in effect for an additional two years.

increase labor force attachment by a meaningful amount on average. The upper bound of our 95 percent confidence interval on employment is 2.1 percentage points. For wage outcomes, point estimates suggest a small or zero impact but are less precise. Appendix Table A.4 reproduces this table for models without covariates, and shows that point estimates are very similar.

A number of robustness checks in Appendix A also fail to find strong evidence of employment effects. Appendix Figure A.7 shows robustness to alternative bandwidth choices for employment and earnings, using a symmetric bandwidth on both sides of the cutoff. Appendix Figure A.13 presents estimates for other durations ranging from 1 to 27 months after work requirements. We also obtain similar estimates if we use triangular kernels instead of a uniform kernel to weight observations (Appendix Table A.3). We reproduce Table 5 without covariates in Appendix Table A.4. The estimates on employment and earnings are slightly higher, but still not close to statistical significance. Appendix Figure A.14 plots these estimates over time to examine robustness to the choice of duration. While there are signs of an upward trend in both employment and earnings, none of the estimates are statistically significant and they remain within the confidence intervals for models with controls (Appendix Figure A.13). Collectively, these results reinforce that our findings are consistent with zero or moderate average impacts on employment or earnings.

5.2 Heterogeneity of Labor Market Effects

The RD regressions in Section 5.1 fail to detect an impact of work requirements on labor market outcomes on average. In this section, we examine the heterogeneity of the effect of work requirements on earnings. It may simultaneously be true that work requirements induce no change in earnings among the majority of participants who are far from the threshold—either because they are so far below it that meeting it would be too difficult or because they would be above it even in the absence of work requirements—and induce a substantial change in earnings among individuals near the cutoff. In such a case, the average effect of work requirements may be statistically indistinguishable from zero despite the existence of a subgroup of participants for whom the effect is positive.

To examine the heterogeneity of the effects, we estimate unconditional quantile regressions (Firpo et al. 2009). For the qth quantile of the overall monthly earnings distribution, y_q, the unconditional quantile regression estimates the effect of work requirements on earnings at the qth quantile. The quantiles are computed for the unconditional monthly earnings distribution, including observations on both sides of age 50 within the MSE-optimal bandwidth. The unconditional quantile regression method

Table 5: RD Estimates of Key Outcomes, 18 Months After Work Requirements

	Main Stock (September 2013)	Placebo Stock (ARRA Period)
Panel A. SNAP Participation		
Discontinuity	-0.238	0.003
	(0.015)	(0.020)
Control Mean	0.631	0.664
N	15,675	13,438
Panel B. Employment		
Discontinuity	-0.007	0.005
	(0.014)	(0.011)
Control Mean	0.290	0.278
N	18,919	20,651
Panel C. Employed or Earned Income		
Discontinuity	-0.006	0.008
	(0.015)	(0.015)
Control Mean	0.347	0.333
N	17,349	17,215
Panel D. Earnings		
Discontinuity	-6.4	31.2
	(19.4)	(23.0)
Control Mean	356.4	342.8
N	16,027	18,243
Panel E. Log Earnings		
Discontinuity	-0.018	0.060
	(0.085)	(0.074)
Control Mean	1.909	1.873
N	17,424	20,502
Panel F. Exemption (Other than Age)		
Discontinuity	0.057	-0.019
	(0.012)	(0.012)
Control Mean	0.096	0.114
N	15,970	17,434

Notes: Table shows regressions coefficients from local linear RD specifications with a uniform kernel, corresponding to RD figures in the text. Standard errors clustered by monthly age (the running variable) are reported in parentheses. Control mean is the predicted mean of the corresponding outcome variable immediately to the right of the age 50 threshold (the intercept with the cutoff). Employment and earnings are measured from UI records. Log earnings calculated as $\ln(y+1)$. Earnings include those with zero UI earnings, and are winsorized at the 99 percent level by yearly age within each calendar month. The variables Earned Income and Exemption status are reported on DSS records.

computes the unconditional (marginal) effects by taking a weighted average of conditional effects (conditional on observables). The estimates can therefore be interpreted as the unconditional effect of work requirements on earnings, without needing to hold other covariates, such as age, constant in the interpretation. The benefit of this approach over a standard conditional quantile regression is that, even if the qth quantile of earnings at one age is different from the qth quantile of earnings at another age, the estimated unconditional quantile effects have a single dollar value interpretation.

We estimate the unconditional quantile regressions at each percentile of the earnings distribution using the recentered influence function method of Firpo et al. (2009). The regression specification excludes controls other than age and otherwise mirrors our baseline RD specification (Equation 4). The coefficient on the indicator for below age 50 in the qth regression can be interpreted as the effect of work requirements on earnings at y_q, the qth percentile of the unconditional monthly earnings distribution. By estimating the unconditional quantile effect at each percentile, we trace out the potentially heterogeneous effect along the earnings distribution.

Identification in the Firpo et al. (2009) approach relies on the assumption of selection on observables. That is, treatment is assumed to be exogenous conditional on observables. This is equivalent to the assumptions required for identification in our baseline RD, discussed in subsection 4.1. If the RD assumptions hold, then exposure to work requirements status is fully determined by observable age and exogenous to other determinants of earnings, and no additional exogeneity assumptions are required for the unconditional quantile regressions.

The estimates describe changes in the distribution of earnings as a result of work requirements. However, the estimates do not allow inference about the identity of the individuals whose behavior shifted as a result of work requirements. In other words, it is not possible to say what the counterfactual earnings would be among the people who are at a given quantile in the observed work requirements regime. The identity of the participants at the qth quantile generally will not remain fixed under counterfactual work requirements regimes, except under the assumption that the effect is (weakly) monotonically increasing in the original quantile, which would guarantee rank invariance. The earnings distribution among 49-year-olds stochastically dominates the distribution among 50-year-olds, which is consistent with rank invariance but cannot definitively rule out rank switching.

With this caveat in place, Figure 8 plots the main coefficients of interest at each percentile using the stock population, and the shaded region shows 95 percent confidence intervals. Since the RD estimate of the effect in the lower range of the distribution is mechanically zero,[29] we only report results for the 60th percentile and above. The vertical red

[29]The bottom two-thirds of the earnings distribution on both sides of the age 50 cutoff have zero earnings.

line is placed between the percentiles of the earnings distribution that straddle the minimum earnings required to maintain eligibility, calculated as 80 times the hourly minimum wage over the period ($7.25 per hour).

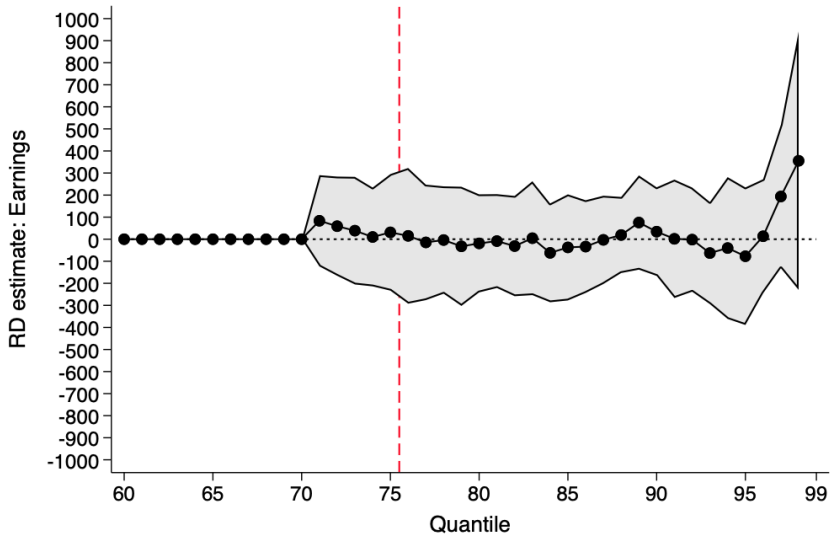
Figure 8a shows the estimates 18 months after the start of work requirements; Figure 8b shows them at 24 months. At 18 months, just after the completion of the gradual roll-out of work requirements, the estimated earnings effects are not statistically distinguishable from zero across the entire earnings distribution. This result is consistent with the estimated null average effects of work requirements on employment and earnings in Figures 6a and 7a. Appendix Figure A.15 considers the analogous exercise for the placebo cohorts (on SNAP in September 2011). We estimate zeros along the entire earnings distribution in the placebo period at both the 18-month and 24-month intervals.

An additional six months after the completion of the roll-out, however, the estimates for the treatment period are substantively different (Figure 8b). The effect of work requirements on monthly earnings remains statistically indistinguishable from zero at the top and bottom ends of the earnings distribution. However, between the 70th and 80th percentiles of the distribution, the estimates are consistently positive and statistically significant at the 5 or 10 percent levels. With the caveats in interpreting results from quantile regressions discussed above, this pattern is consistent with a positive response among SNAP participants who are already near the work requirement's threshold. The peak of the point estimates is at the 75th percentile, slightly above the minimum threshold for meeting work requirements. The increases are in the range of $250 to $450 per month, which is equivalent to shifting a portion of the earnings distribution to the right by three to six percentiles in the vicinity of the minimum work requirement threshold. This is a substantial increase in earnings.[30]

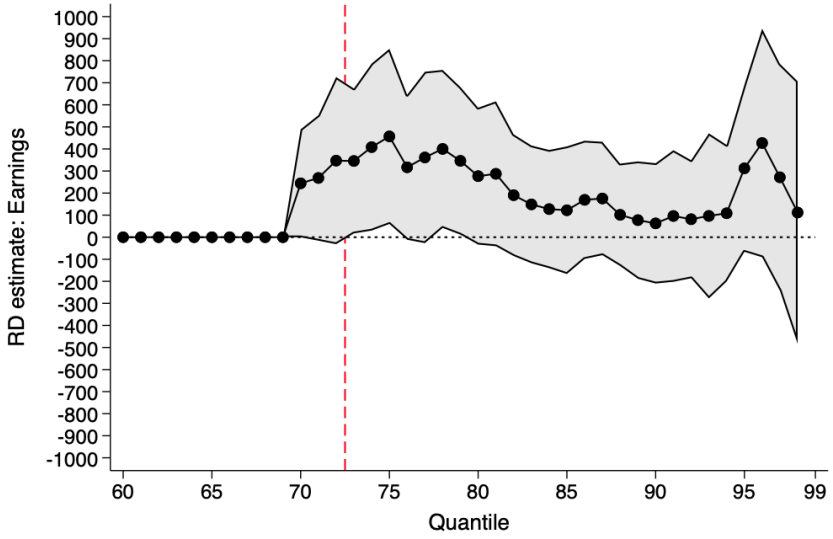
The pattern documented in Figure 8b would imply that work requirements have a meaningful positive earnings impact in a narrow subset of the earnings distribution of SNAP participants. However, the zeros estimated just six months earlier in Figure 8a dictate caution in the interpretation of these results. Because our primary dataset ends in December 2015, we cannot check whether the positive effects documented in September 2015 (Figure 8b) are a short-term statistical anomaly or a persistent feature. Consequently, we view these results as important if true, but suggestive. If the estimated "delayed" impact of work requirements on earnings is taken at face value, there are at least three possible mechanisms for the delay. The first is simply that it takes time for participants to find (additional) work. The second is that improvements in the labor market in mid-2015 may interact with work requirements status. The third is that participants can obtain a new 12-month recertification period by

[30]By comparison, in 2015, when our regression outcomes are measured, the federal poverty line for a single-person household was $11,770, or $981 per month.

Figure 8: Heterogeneity in RD Estimates of Earnings



(a) 18 Months After Work Requirements



(b) 24 Months After Work Requirements

Notes: Figure plots coefficients from individual-level regressions of monthly earnings. Each coefficient is from a separate regression for that quantile using the recentered influence function method of Firpo et al. (2009). Top panel measures earnings in March 2015; bottom panel measures earnings in September 2015. Shading denotes 95 percent confidence intervals. For visual clarity, we omit presenting the 99th percentile because the point estimate at 18 months is very imprecise, making it difficult to discern the magnitudes of the other estimates.

temporarily meeting the work requirements after 6 months. Participants who meet work requirements at the end of their initial 6-month recertification period and then stop working are not removed from SNAP until their next 12-month recertification. In the interim, they can receive several months of benefits without meeting work requirements (see Appendix B). However, a participant who reaches the maximum allowable number of months of not meeting work requirements must subsequently meet them every month to remain on SNAP. Due to this certification schedule, work requirements effectively become more stringent over time,[31] which is directionally consistent with the observed increase in the earnings impact between Figures 8a and 8b.

A natural question is whether the earnings increases in Figure 8b are concentrated among participants who exit SNAP and work more to compensate for the loss of benefits, or among those who work more to retain SNAP eligibility. However, our RD identification strategy will not yield causal estimates for these separate groups: examining earnings for those remaining on SNAP in September 2015, for example, involves conditioning on the (endogenous) outcome of not having exited within 24 months of work requirements. Without a way to overcome this selection bias, we we are unable to determine whether the earnings increases are driven by those who remain on SNAP or those who exit the program.

5.3 Welfare Impacts

The previous results establish that work requirements drastically decrease retention among the stock population of beneficiaries while possibly increasing earnings among a subset of this population. A policymaker designing a SNAP eligibility policy trades off these competing forces. While a full accounting of the welfare impacts of work requirements is outside the scope of this paper, this section develops a simple cost-benefit comparison that suggests conditions under which work requirements are socially beneficial.

We begin with the approximation that work requirements are socially beneficial if the gains to the government are greater than the losses to program participants, adjusting for relative welfare weights between government funds and resources for low-income households. On the margin, it is reasonable to posit that the effects of work requirements-induced earnings increases on participant utility are second-order, and therefore do not contribute to participant welfare. Therefore, work requirements are beneficial if and only if:

[31] Until the work requirements "clock" is reset after 36 months.

$$\underbrace{\eta \cdot (-dB)}_{\substack{\text{value of lost benefits} \\ \text{to SNAP participants}}} < \underbrace{-dB \cdot \phi}_{\substack{\text{value of other} \\ \text{govt. spending}}} + \underbrace{\tau \cdot dE}_{\substack{\text{value of tax} \\ \text{revenue from } dE}}$$

where η represents the social planner's welfare weight on the SNAP population relative to the average taxpayer, $dB < 0$ represents the total change in SNAP recipients' benefits due to work requirements, τ represents the average tax rate on work requirements-induced income among SNAP participants, dE represents the total work requirements-induced increase in earnings among participants, and $\phi > 1$ captures the fact that raising \$1 in government revenue costs more than \$1 in resources due to deadweight loss in taxation. The left-hand side of the inequality measures the loss to SNAP participants due to work requirements, scaled by the social planner's weight on an additional dollar to SNAP η. The first term on the right-hand side, $-dB \cdot \phi$, measures the benefit to taxpayers from no longer needing to raise $-dB$ in tax revenue, scaled by the efficiency cost of taxes ϕ. The second term on the right-hand side, $\tau \cdot dE$, measures the benefit to taxpayers from the additional tax revenue due to work requirements-induced income increases. This term is not scaled by ϕ because taxes raised from other taxpayers fall dollar-for-dollar with additional taxes raised from SNAP participants.

In order for work requirements to be socially beneficial, the social planner's weight on SNAP participants is bounded from above by

$$\eta < \phi - \frac{\tau \cdot dE}{dB}$$

If the social planner values an additional dollar to a SNAP participant less than $(\phi - \tau \cdot dE/dB)/\phi$ times an additional dollar spent on a different government program, then work requirements increase total welfare. Recall that $dB < 0$, so that $(\tau \cdot dE)/dB \leq 0$. Work requirements are more likely to be socially beneficial the smaller is the efficiency cost of taxation (ϕ), the larger is the average tax rate on work requirements-induced earnings (τ), and the larger is the induced earnings gain relative to the loss in benefits (dE/dB). Each of these factors would give the taxpayer more revenue per dollar of lost SNAP benefits.

As a rough calibration, we suggest approximations for various terms in this inequality. To calibrate dE, we sum the earnings gains from our heterogeneity analysis in subsection 5.2. We use the estimates 24 months after work requirements from Figure 8b to calibrate the best-case scenario for work requirements. At this duration, the average earnings gain per

participant is $70.16 per month ($841.94 annually).

To calculate total benefits lost, we sum average benefits ($192 per month) times the fraction of the stock population exiting SNAP due to work requirements (0.24), and the phase-out of benefits among those who remain on SNAP that is attributable to increased earnings:[32]

$$dB = -0.24 \cdot 192 - 0.36 \cdot 0.24 \cdot 70.16 = -52.14$$

where 0.24 is the fraction of participants who exit SNAP due to work requirements after 24 months[33] and therefore lose their entire benefit amount, 0.36 is the fraction of participants who remain on SNAP (accounting for natural attrition) and therefore lose partial benefits if their income rises, and the second instance of 0.24 is the amount of benefits lost by a continued SNAP participant for an additional dollar of income.

To calibrate τ, we note that few non-disabled, non-elderly childless adults are eligible for social programs that would implicitly tax their income. Therefore, average tax rates are primarily composed of payroll taxes 15.3 percent) applied to all earnings, plus a 10 percent income tax applied to earnings above the standard deduction ($\$6,300$ in 2015). For a single unmarried earner working 80 hours per month at the minimum wage (annual earnings of $\$6,960$), the average tax rate is approximately 8.6 percent. We therefore set $\tau = 0.164$. Finally, we take $\phi = 1.3$ from Hendren and Sprung-Keyser (2019).

These calibrations suggest that work requirements are socially beneficial when

$$\eta < \phi - \frac{\tau \cdot dE}{dB} = 1.3 - \frac{0.164 \cdot 70.16}{-52.14} = 1.52$$

that is, when the social planner's weight on SNAP participants is no more than 1.52 times the weight on the representative taxpayer, or $1.52/\phi = 1.17$ times the weight on alternative government spending.

If the social planner values an additional dollar to a SNAP participant more than $1.52 to the representative taxpayer (or 1.17 times an additional dollar of alternative government spending), then work requirements reduce social welfare. Using the estimated null effect on earnings at 18 months after work requirements to calibrate dE would yield the conclusion that work requirements reduce social welfare as long as the social planner values spending on SNAP participants no less than other government spending.

[32] Average benefits for ABAWDs in Virginia are from the data constructed in Mills et al. (2014), which we obtained from the USDA via the Freedom of Information Act. As discussed in subsection 2.1, benefits are reduced by 30 cents for each additional dollar of income, in addition to a 20 percent earned income deduction. This implies that SNAP benefits effectively decline by 24 cents for each additional dollar of earned income.

[33] As shown in Figure A.6, the RD estimate on retention at 24 months is nearly identical to the estimate at 18 months.

6 Conclusion

As work requirements in means-tested programs come to the forefront of modern policy debates, it is critical to understand their causal impact on program participation and work. On one hand, work requirements may reduce benefits for economically vulnerable adults without a counterbalancing improvement in labor market outcomes. On the other hand, work requirements could successfully incentivize labor force participation, thereby helping to counter disincentives to work from means-tested programs.

We measure the magnitude of both phenomena by combining SNAP and UI administrative data from Virginia with quasi-experimental policy variation. Our estimates suggest that SNAP work requirements dramatically reduce participation among affected adults, with point estimates suggesting a 52 percent decline in participation by the completion of the roll-out. Focusing on the sample of people already on SNAP just before the reintroduction of work requirements, we estimate a drop in retention of 38 percent. These declines are largest among adults with characteristics linked to economic vulnerability. At the same time, we statistically rule out a large average increase in UI-covered employment, and fail to detect an increase in self-employment or wage earnings along a large majority of the distribution. There is, however, tentative evidence of increased earnings in the vicinity of the eligibility threshold. In practice, work requirements appear to screen out a large number of SNAP beneficiaries in exchange for an earnings increase among a limited subset of individuals.

The similarity of participation patterns at younger ages subject to work requirements suggests that our results may also generalize to SNAP beneficiaries below age 50 (Figure 2b). Caution is warranted, however, in generalizing our results to Medicaid: state Medicaid work requirements vary widely, and the value of Medicaid may differ from that of SNAP benefits heterogeneously for different beneficiaries. Nevertheless, an analogous study of work requirements in Medicaid could reveal commonalities and distinctions between work requirements across different programs. The ways in which work requirements interact across programs, as well as a more detailed picture of heterogeneous impacts of a given work requirements policy across beneficiaries, are important directions for future research.

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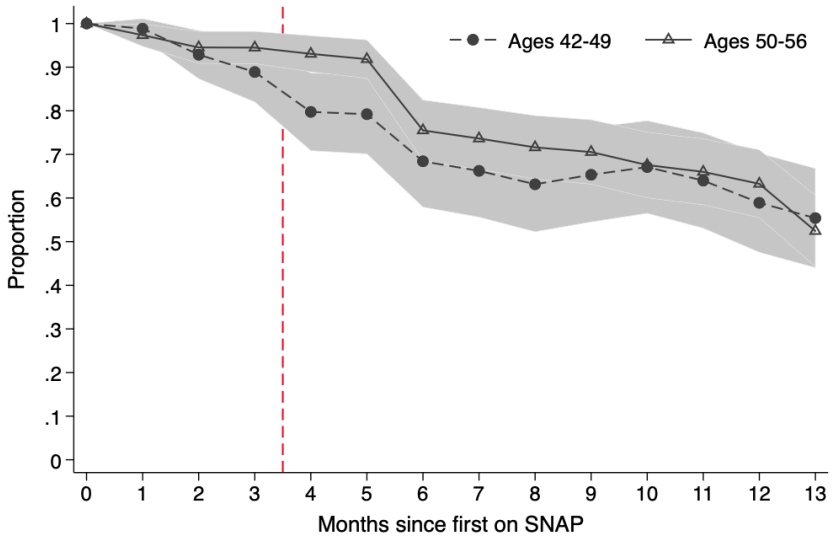
A Additional Results

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics of SNAP Participant-Months in Full Sample (2005-2016)

	All		Non-ABAWD Adults		ABAWDs	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age	24.29	32.8	41.2	16.4	32.4	9.9
Adult	0.55	0.50	1.00	0.000	1.00	0.02
Female	0.54	0.50	0.62	0.48	0.39	0.49
Married	0.13	0.33	0.27	0.44	0.08	0.27
Household Size	3.0	1.7	2.6	1.6	1.2	0.6
Household Head	0.43	0.50	0.76	0.43	0.88	0.32
Homeless	0.02	0.15	0.02	0.14	0.12	0.32
White	0.41	0.49	0.45	0.50	0.37	0.48
Black	0.36	0.48	0.34	0.47	0.37	0.48
Some College+	0.07	0.25	0.13	0.33	0.12	0.32
Has Earned Income	0.13	0.34	0.26	0.44	0.16	0.37
Has Unearned Income	0.24	0.42	0.34	0.47	0.08	0.27
Avg. Annual Wages	4,200	10,463	7,993	13,492	5,940	11,366
Fraction of Months Employed	0.22	0.36	0.39	0.41	0.37	0.38
Ever reported...						
Any Disability	0.15	0.36	0.29	0.45	0.09	0.28
Exempt from Work Registration	0.39	0.49	0.70	0.46	0.26	0.44
Exempt Due to Dependent	0.13	0.34	0.25	0.43	0.08	0.27
Medicaid Recipient	0.69	0.46	0.60	0.49	0.29	0.45
TANF Recipient	0.22	0.42	0.16	0.36	0.05	0.21
SNAP E&T Participant	0.04	0.19	0.05	0.21	0.16	0.36
Moved County	0.23	0.42	0.21	0.41	0.22	0.41
N	2,272,827		1,008,085		238,782	

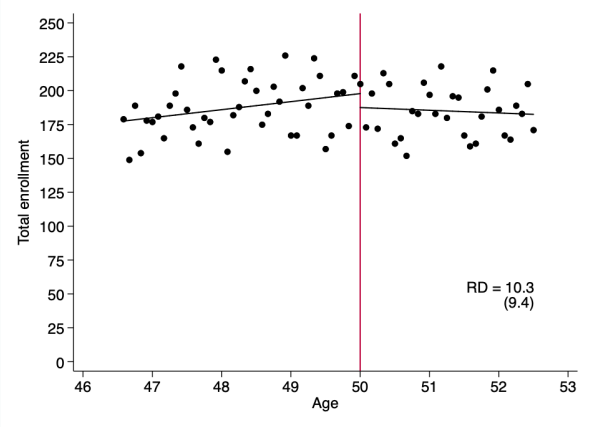
Notes: Table reports descriptive statistics of SNAP participant-months across the whole sample, rather than restricted to the stock population in the main analysis. N denotes count of participant-months. The variables Has Earned Income and Has Unearned Income are reported in DSS files. The variables Avg. Annual Wages and the Fraction of Months Employed are both calculated from UI records.

Figure A.1: SNAP Participation Survival in Counties with Work Requirement Exemptions

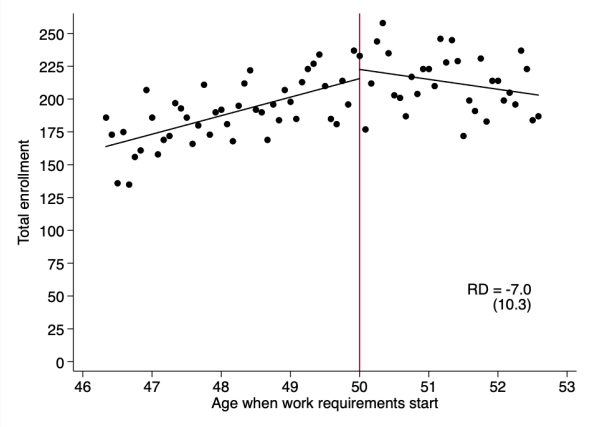


Notes: Figure plots participation survival for ABAWDs aged 42–49 and able-bodied adults without dependents or disabilities aged 50–56 in counties with exemptions for work requirements in May 2014, who have not had a SNAP spell earlier in our sample period, and who first receive benefits between July 2014 and December 2014.

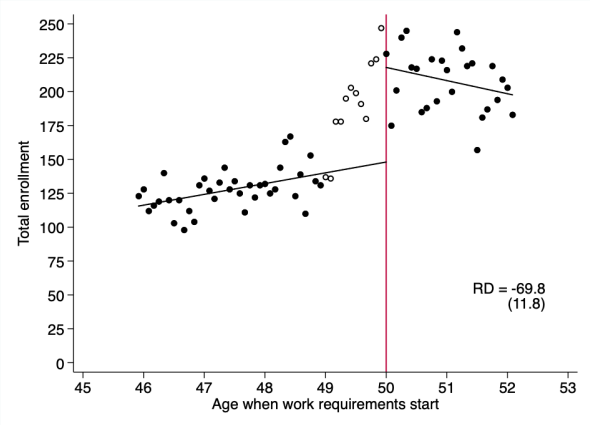
Figure A.2: RD Estimate of Total SNAP Participation



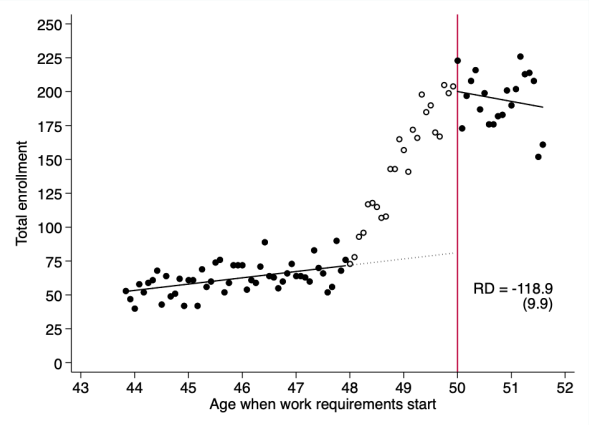
(a) 24 Months Before Work Requirements



(b) Month of Work Requirements



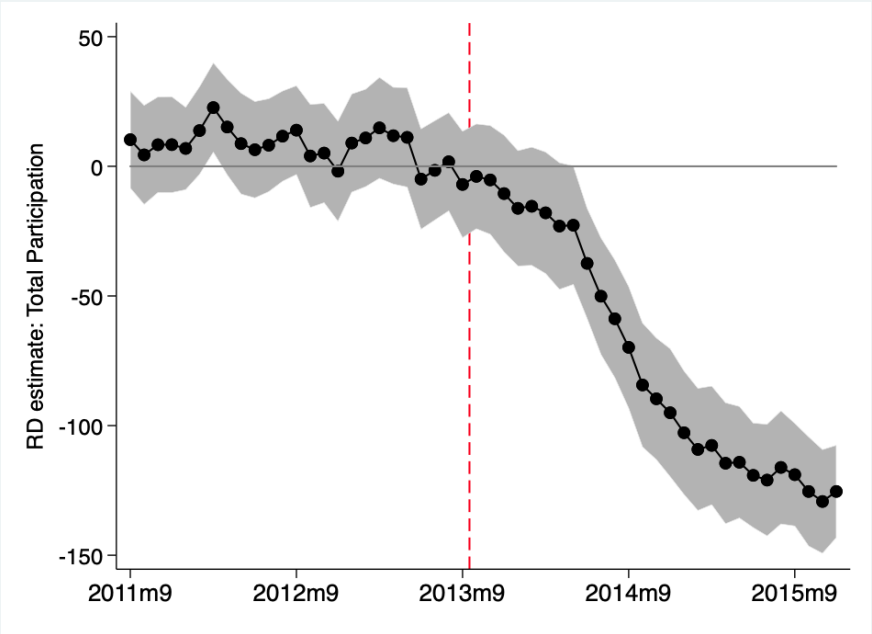
(c) 12 Months After Work Requirements



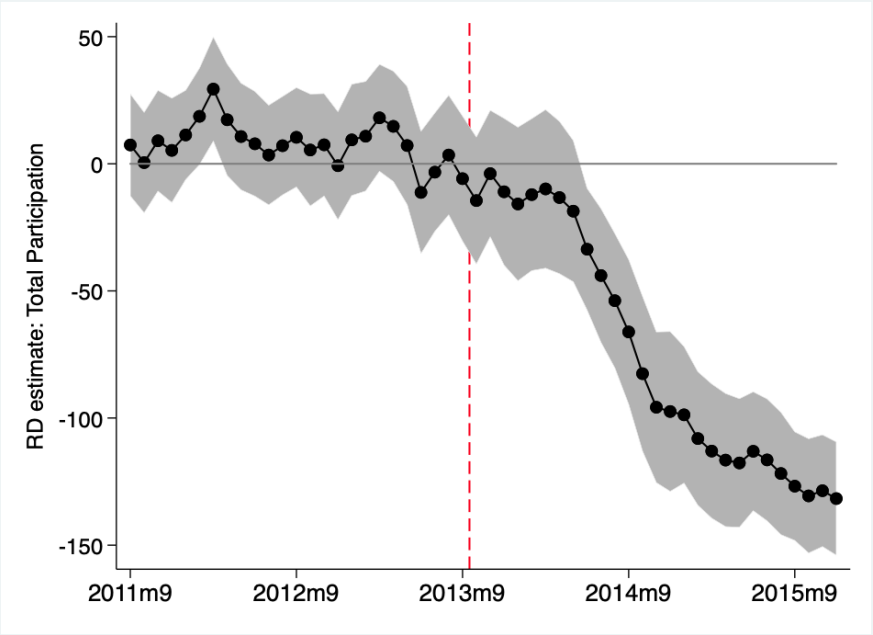
(d) 24 Months After Work Requirements

Notes: Figure visually displays the RD results for total SNAP participation 12 months before, 0 months after, 12 months after, and 24 months after work requirements. The scatter plot shows total participant counts by age in quarters, and the lines show a linear regression fit on both sides of the eligibility threshold. Standard errors are clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The sample consists of the subset of counties for which work requirements remain on after October 2013.

Figure A.3: RD Estimates of Total SNAP Participation at Other Intervals



(a) Age Polynomial: Linear



(b) Age Polynomial: Quadratic

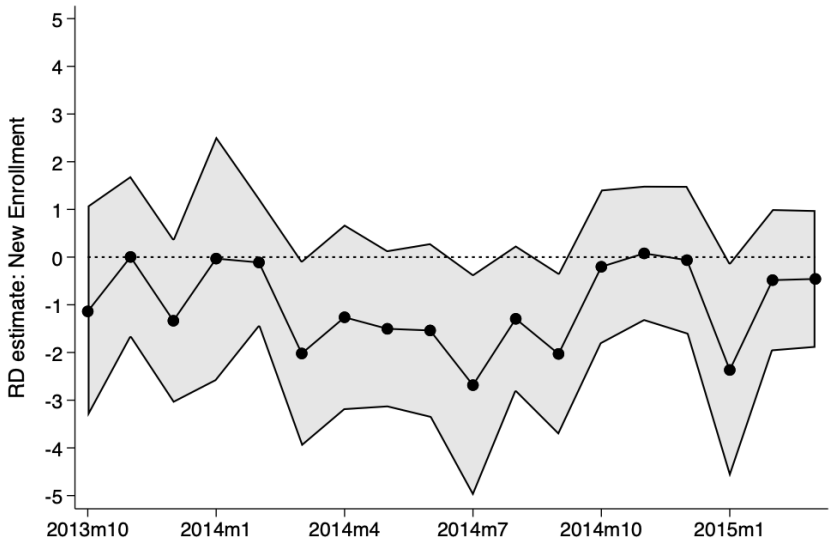
Notes: Figure shows RD coefficients for SNAP participation, repeated for other intervals in addition to the baseline interval (18 months after work requirements). In this figure, the coefficient at 2015m3 corresponds to Figure 5a. Panel A presents RD estimates using linear age polynomials and Panel B presents estimates with quadratic age polynomials for robustness. Shaded regions denote 95 percent confidence intervals that cluster standard errors on monthly age.

Table A.2: RD Estimates for SNAP Participation and Employment Outcomes at 18 months, by Labor Force Attachment

		Quintile of Predicted Employment Probability in September 2013				
	All	Lowest	2nd	3rd	4th	Highest
Panel A. SNAP Participation						
Discontinuity	-0.250	-0.286	-0.220	-0.275	-0.251	-0.122
	(0.014)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.040)
Control Mean	0.631	0.669	0.685	0.669	0.649	0.462
N	17,438	4,496	3,795	3,925	3,491	3,390
Panel B. Employment						
Discontinuity	0.009	0.023	-0.004	-0.028	-0.029	-0.006
	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.044)	(0.031)
Control Mean	0.281	0.092	0.189	0.222	0.412	0.694
N	16,052	4,725	3,989	3,519	2,507	3,143
Panel C. Earnings						
Discontinuity	20.414	65.896	-77.107	25.518	15.022	4.549
	(27.557)	(50.127)	(39.939)	(52.619)	(58.274)	(76.089)
Control Mean	374.175	132.719	251.026	234.978	447.262	1016.005
N	14,947	4,110	4,209	3,169	3,416	2,757

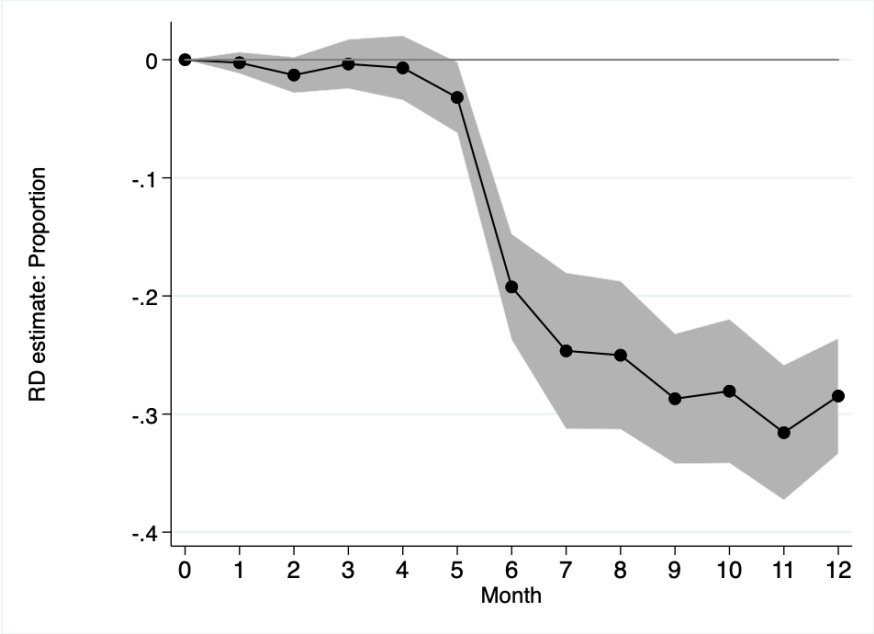
Notes: Table presents the RD coefficient estimates for SNAP participation, employment and earnings for different levels of labor force attachment. Labor force attachment is based on the predicted probability of employment in September 2013, using LASSO regression with data-dependent, theory-driven penalization based on Belloni et al. (2012). The regression includes the following controls to predict employment: indicators for yearly age, indicators for earnings in each month of the previous 7 years prior to Sept. 2013, household size, and indicators for gender, married, private living arrangement, white, black, some college or higher education, reporting earned income on the SNAP application, and reporting unearned income on the SNAP application. Table includes the coefficient, standard error, intercept, and sample size for each specification. Control mean is the predicted mean of the corresponding outcome variable immediately to the right of the age 50 threshold (the intercept with the cutoff).

Figure A.4: RD Estimates of New SNAP Enrollment by Cohort

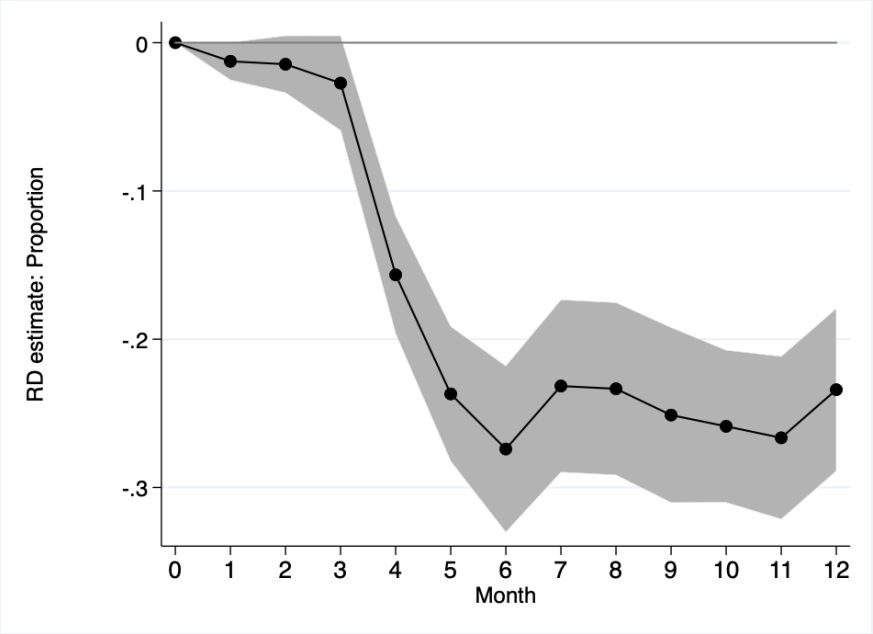


Notes: Figures show coefficients for total new enrollment RDs across successive cohorts of new SNAP entrants. Each regression uses a different MSE-optimal bandwidth, with the bandwidths calculated separately on each side of the cutoff. Shaded regions denote 95 percent confidence intervals that cluster standard errors on monthly age.

Figure A.5: RD Estimates of SNAP Participation in First Year Since Enrollment



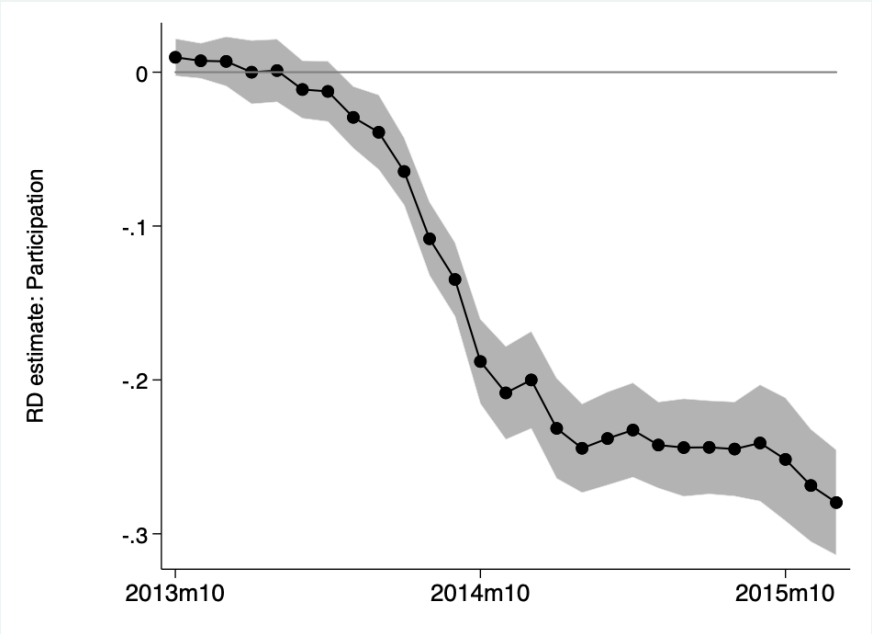
(a) 6-Month Initial Benefit Month Regime



(b) 4-Month Initial Benefit Month Regime

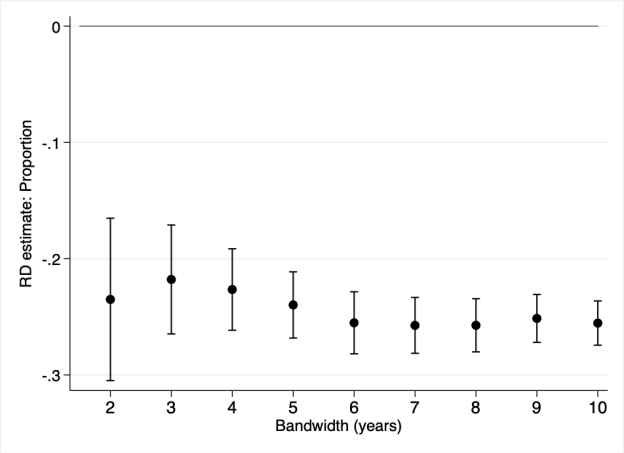
Notes: Figures show RD coefficients for SNAP enrollee cohorts that enter SNAP for the first time since the reinstatement of work requirements in October of 2013, at given points in time since their month of enrollment. Shaded areas represent 95 percent confidence intervals using standard errors clustered by monthly age. Each regression uses the MSE-optimal bandwidth with separate bandwidths calculated on either side of the cutoff.

Figure A.6: RD Estimates of SNAP Participation at Other Intervals, Stock Sample

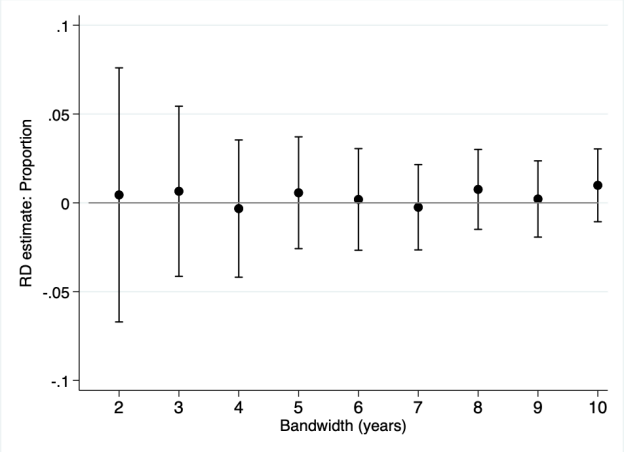


Notes: Figure shows RD coefficients for SNAP participation in the post-ARRA period among the stock population, repeated for other intervals in addition to the baseline interval (18 months after work requirements). In this figure, the coefficient at 2015m3 corresponds to Figure 6a. Shaded regions denote 95 percent confidence intervals that cluster standard errors on quarterly age.

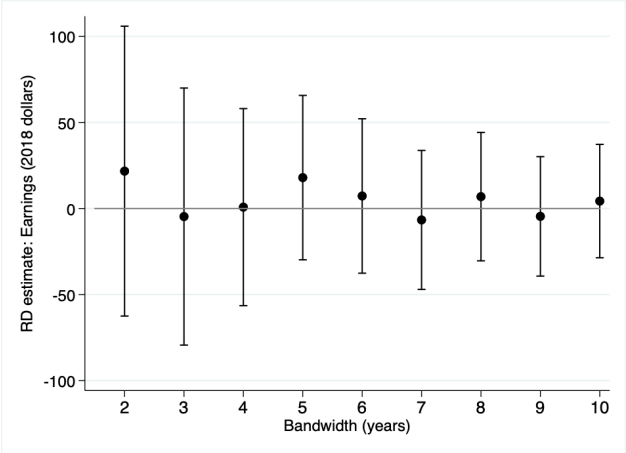
Figure A.7: Robustness to Bandwidth Selection



(a) SNAP Participation



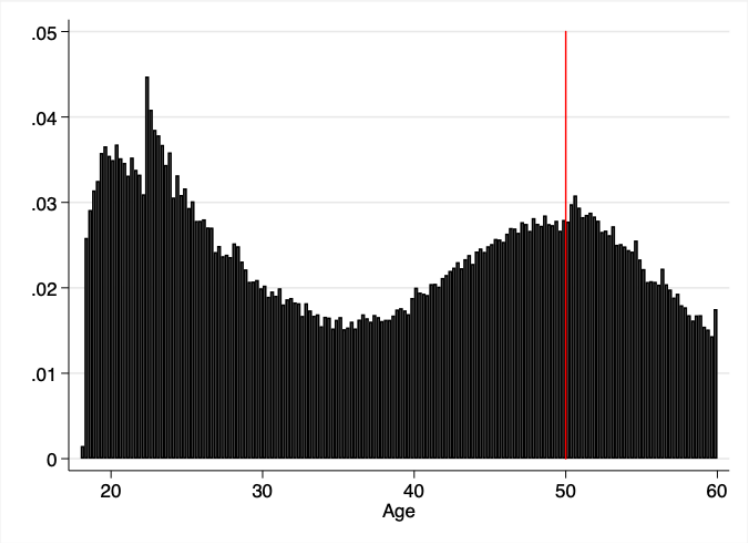
(b) Employment



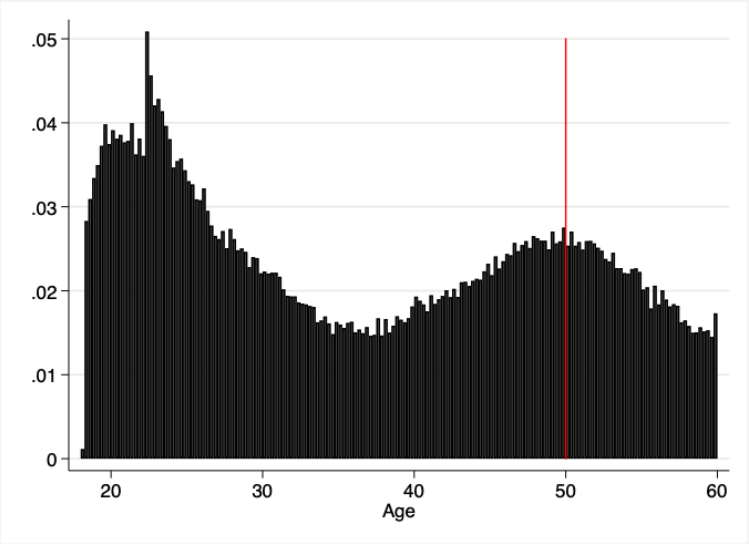
(c) Earnings

Notes: Figures plots the RD estimates 18 months after work requirements were reinstated using different bandwidths. The sample consists of work-registered individuals on SNAP in September 2013 and in the subset of counties where work requirements remain on after October 2013. Earnings are winsorized at the 99 percent level within monthly age.

Figure A.8: Density of Age at SNAP Enrollment



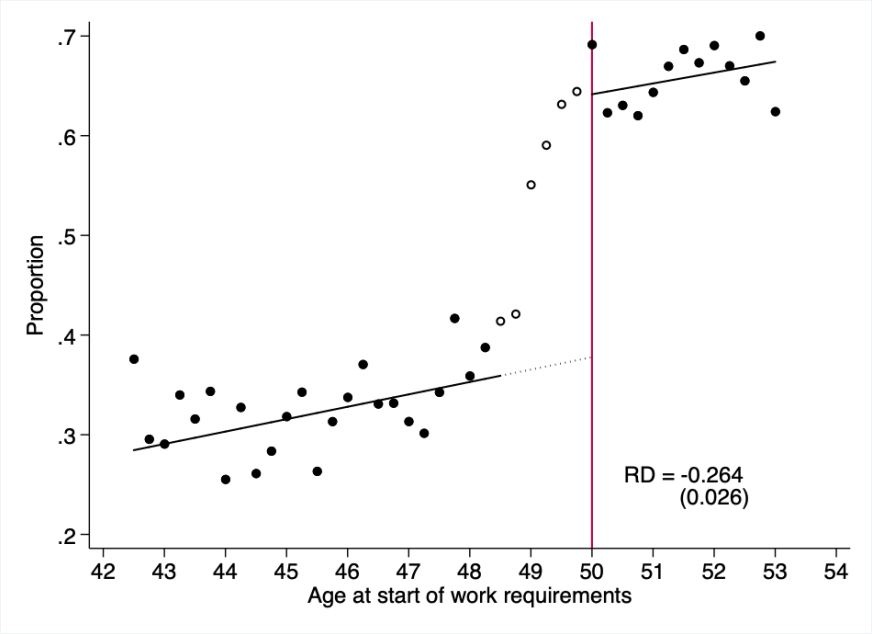
(a) Work Requirements Counties



(b) No Work Requirements Counties

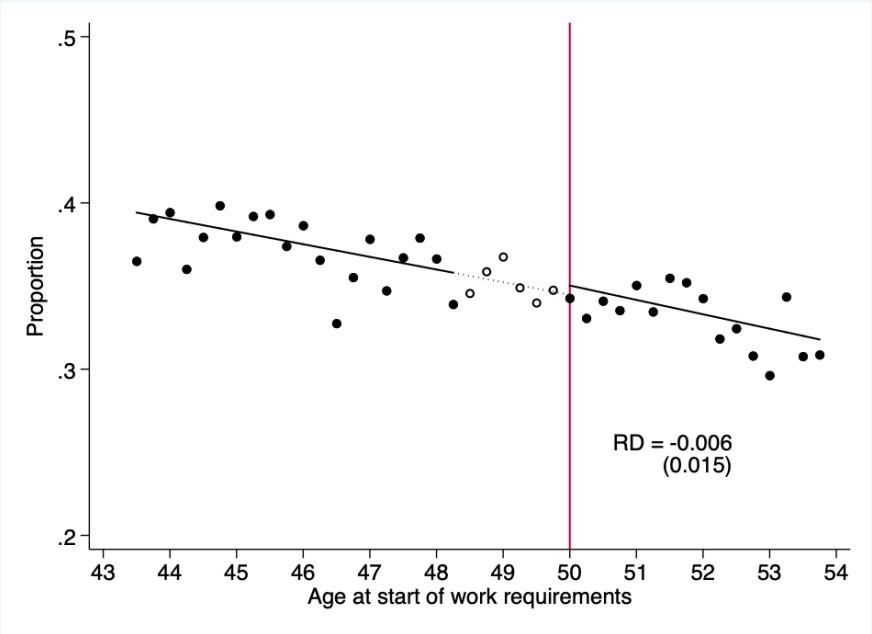
Notes: Figures plots the distribution of age at SNAP enrollment within quarterly bins for those in counties with work requirements and those without work requirements. In counties without work requirements, there is no visible discontinuity in the density at age 50. In counties with work requirements, participation appears to be slightly lower just to the left of 50, although the magnitude is small and formal statistical tests (Frandsen 2017) fail to reject the null that the density is smooth at this cutoff. Taken together, there is not strong evidence of selection based on age around the eligibility threshold for work requirements.

Figure A.9: RD Estimates of SNAP Retention Under Equal Recerticiation Counts

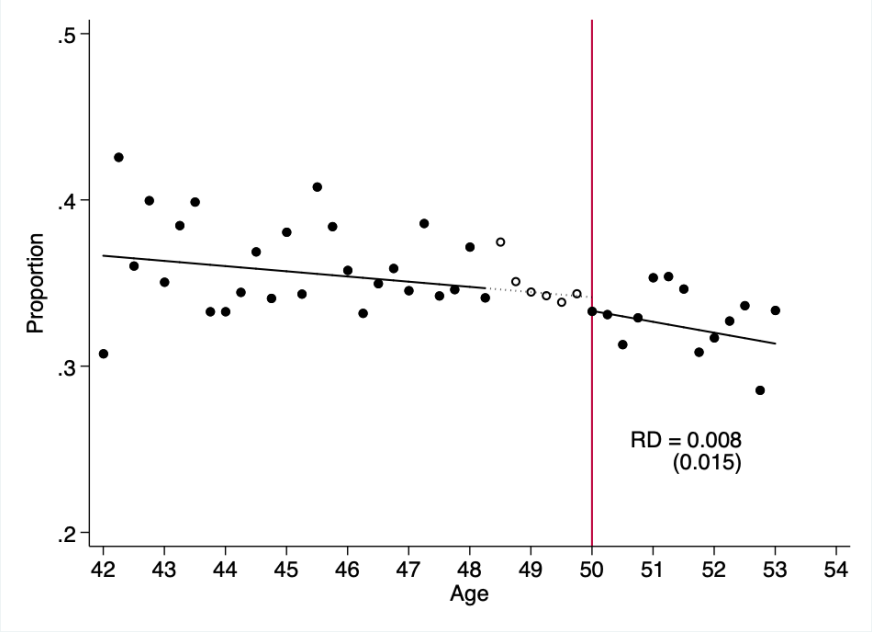


Notes: Figure plots RD results for SNAP participation after eighteen months of work requirements only for the subset of the stock population whose first recertification after the reinstatement of work requirements occurs in the months of October 2013 through March 2014. Participants in this subset of the stock population would have experienced the same number of recertifications (two) if they remain on SNAP 18 months after the reinstatement of work requirements, whether they are in the younger-than-50-group or in the 50-and-older group. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The sample consists of work-registered individuals on SNAP in September 2013 and in the subset of counties for which work requirements remain on after October 2013.

Figure A.10: RD Estimates of Employment (UI or DSS), 18 Months After Work Requirements



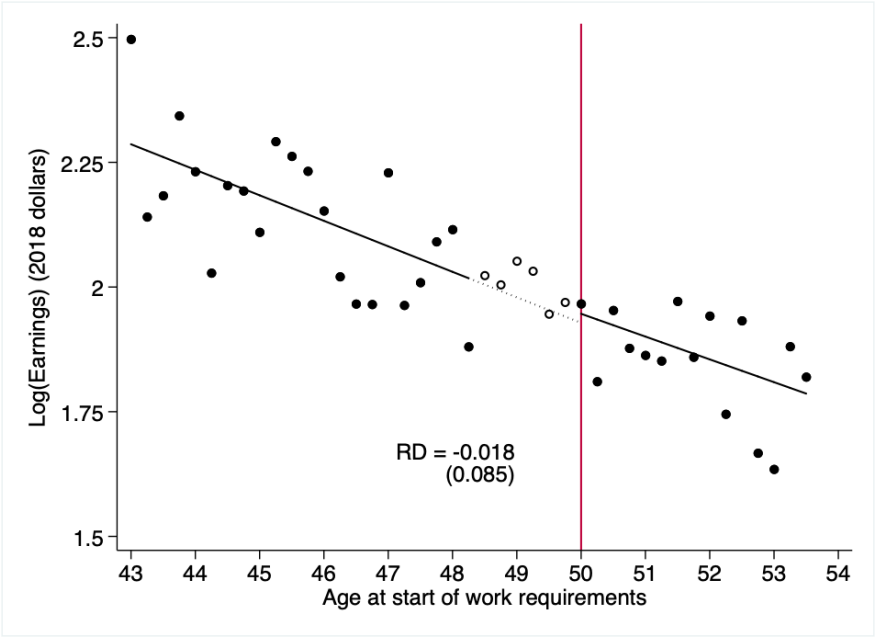
(a) Employment During Work Requirements



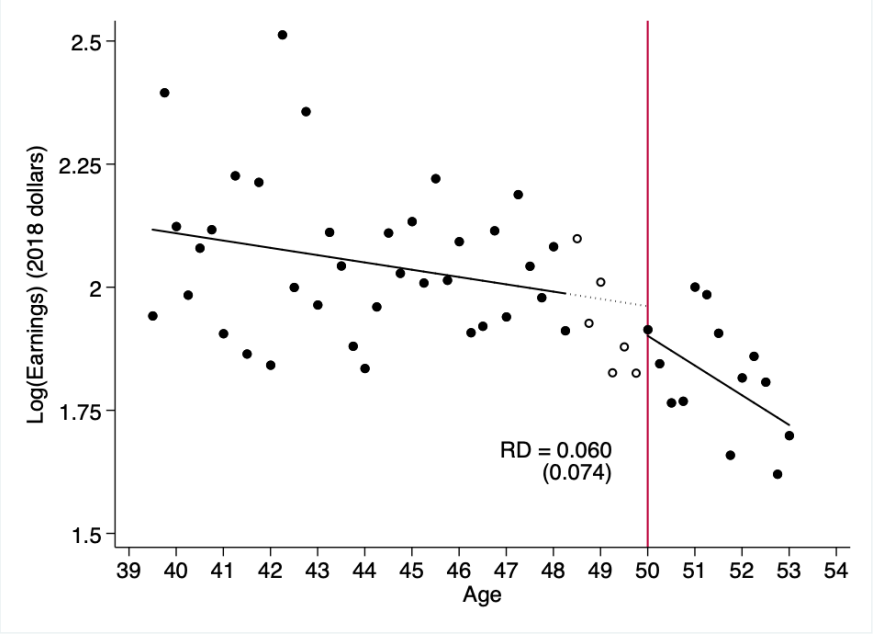
(b) Placebo Test: Employment During ARRA Exemptions

Notes: Panel (a) visually displays the RD results for employment in either the UI data or in DSS-reported earnings after 18 months of work requirements. The scatter plot shows covariate-adjusted means by age in quarters, and the lines show a linear regression fit in months on both sides of the eligibility threshold. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The sample consists of work-registered individuals on SNAP in September 2013 and in the subset of counties where work requirements remain on after October 2013. Panel (b) replicates the same analysis among those participating in September 2011, when the ARRA exemption that suspended work requirements was in effect for an additional two years.

Figure A.11: RD Estimates of Log Earnings, 18 Months After Work Requirements



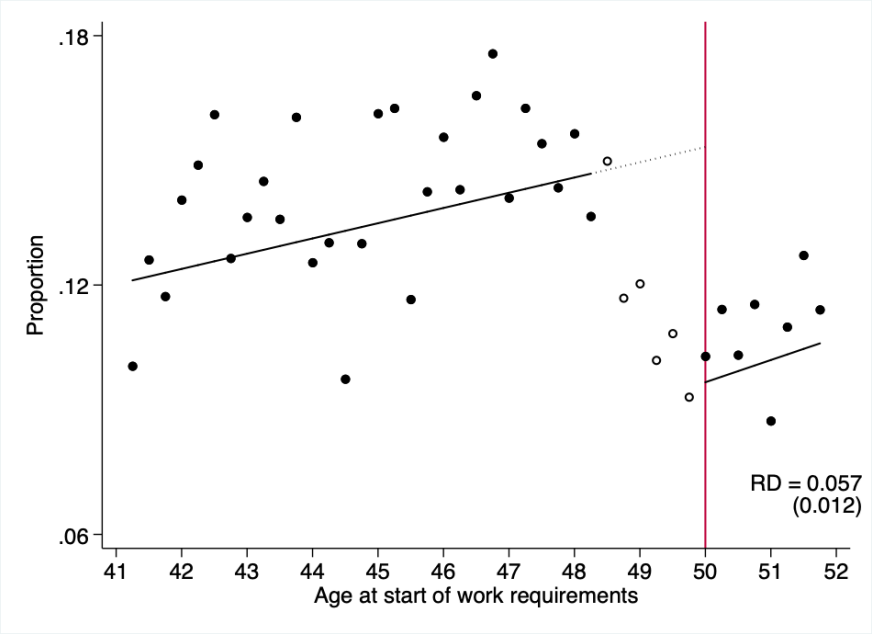
(a) Log Earnings During Work Requirements



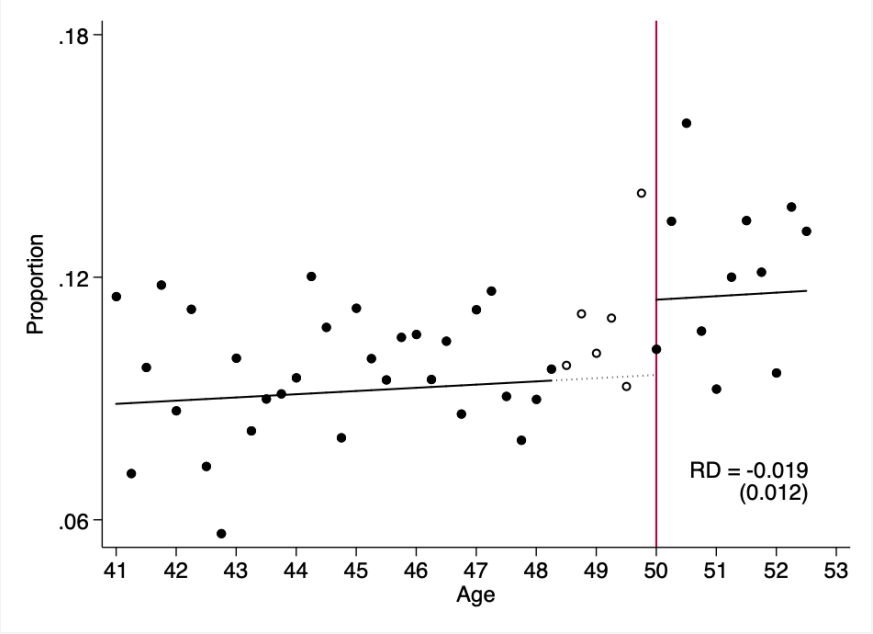
(b) Placebo Test: Log Earnings During ARRA Exemptions

Notes: Panel (a) visually displays the RD results for log earnings after 18 months of work requirements. The scatter plot shows covariate-adjusted means by age in quarters, and the lines show a linear regression fit in months on both sides of the eligibility threshold. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The sample consists of work-registered individuals on SNAP in September 2013 and in the subset of counties where work requirements remain on after October 2013. Panel (b) replicates the same analysis among those participating in September 2011, when the ARRA exemption that suspended work requirements was in effect for an additional two years.

Figure A.12: RD Estimates of Exempt Status, 18 Months After Work Requirements



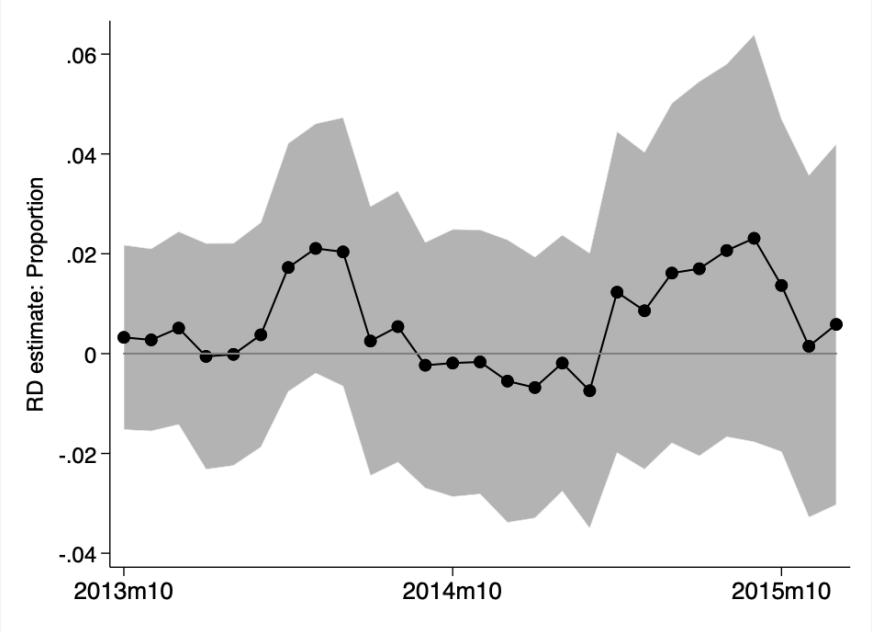
(a) Exemptions During Work Requirements



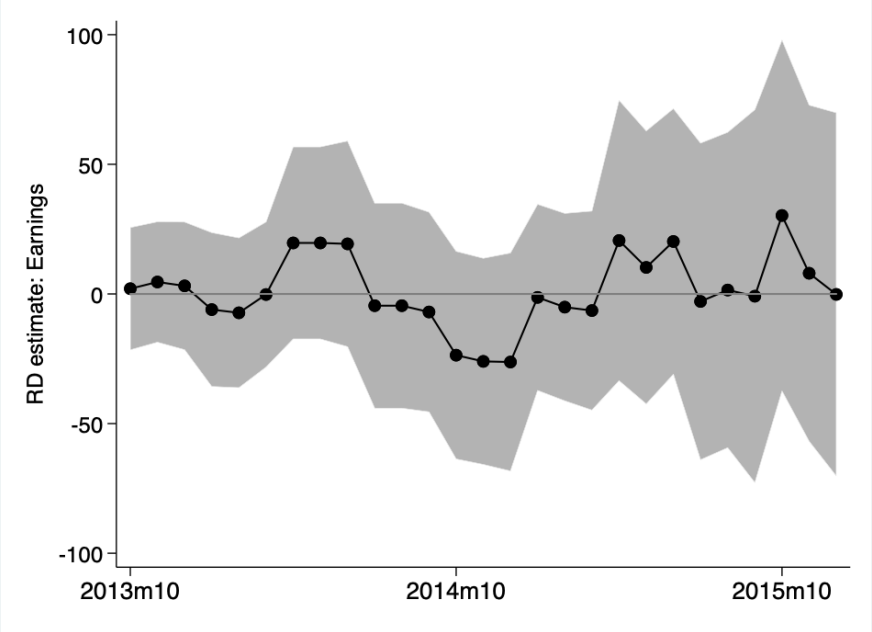
(b) Placebo Test: Exempt Status During ARRA Exemptions

Notes: Panel (a) visually displays the RD results for reported exemptions (except for age) after 18 months of work requirements. The scatter plot shows covariate-adjusted means by age in quarters, and the lines show a linear regression fit in months on both sides of the eligibility threshold. Standard errors clustered by monthly age in parentheses. The sample consists of work-registered individuals on SNAP in September 2013 and in the subset of counties where work requirements remain on after October 2013. Panel (b) replicates the same analysis among those participating in September 2011, when the ARRA exemption that suspended work requirements was in effect for an additional two years.

Figure A.13: RD Estimates of Employment and Earnings at Other Intervals



(a) Employment



(b) Earnings

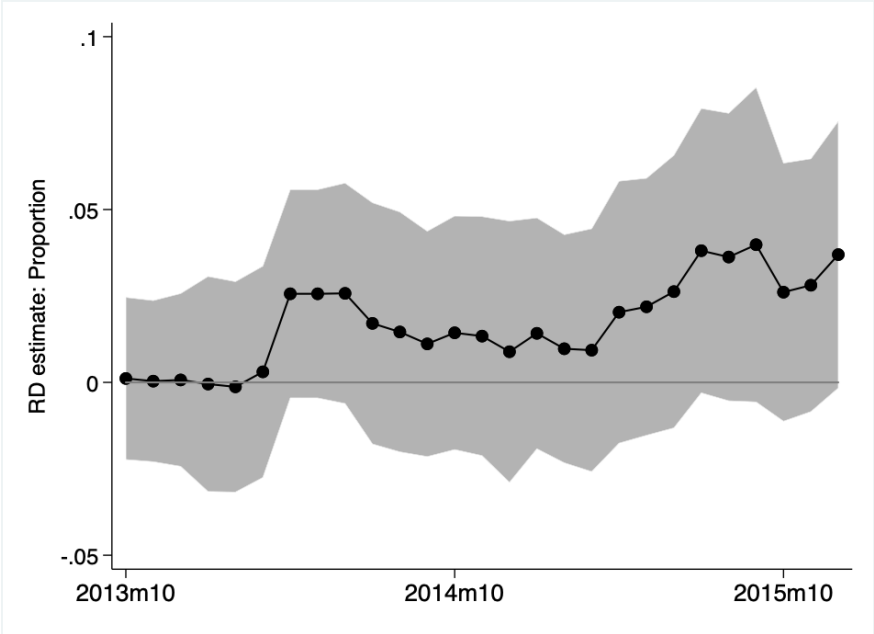
Notes: Figure shows RD coefficients for employment and earnings, repeated for other intervals in addition to the baseline interval. Each estimate calculated using a separate MSE-optimal bandwidths on each side of the donut. Shaded regions denote 95 percent confidence intervals that cluster standard errors on monthly age.

Table A.3: RD Estimates Under Alternative Models

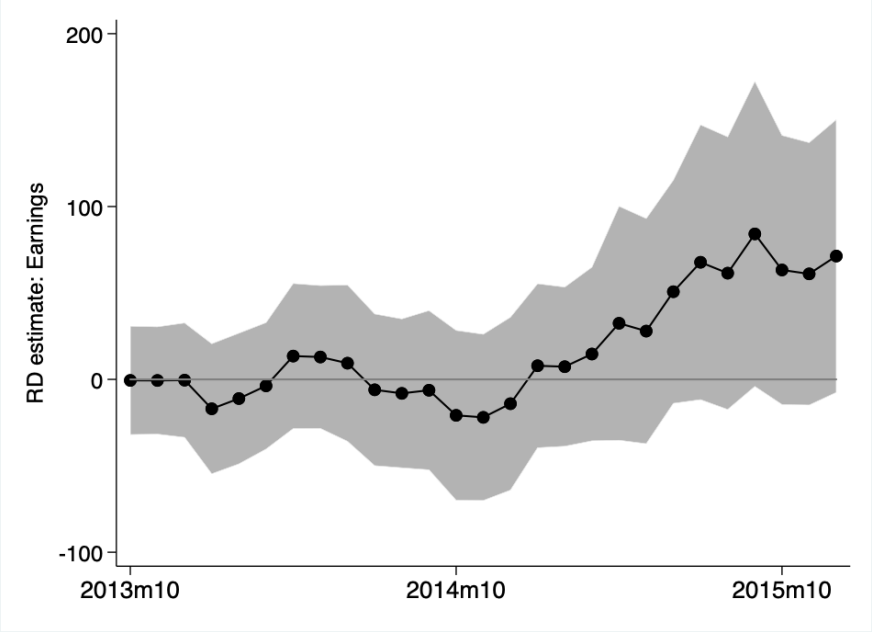
	Linear Uniform		Linear Triangular		Quadratic Uniform		Quadratic Triangular	
	Main Sept 2013	Placebo Sept 2011	Main Sept 2013	Placebo Sept 2011	Main Sept 2013	Placebo Sept 2011	Main Sept 2013	Placebo Sept 2011
Panel A. SNAP Participation								
Discontinuity	-0.238	0.003	-0.242	0.017	-0.232	0.020	-0.233	0.020
	(0.015)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.024)
Control Mean	0.631	0.664	0.634	0.656	0.632	0.653	0.633	0.647
N	15,675	13,438	19,714	16,017	24,445	21,131	28,536	23,043
Panel B. Employed								
Discontinuity	-0.007	0.005	-0.003	0.008	-0.018	0.009	-0.014	0.012
	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.023)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.015)
Control Mean	0.290	0.278	0.281	0.274	0.273	0.278	0.279	0.275
N	18,919	20,651	19,149	22,542	22,984	21,653	26,897	28,091
Panel C. Earnings								
Discontinuity	-6.4	31.2	-9.1	27.7	-20.1	46.7	11.3	33.3
	(19.4)	(23.0)	(16.7)	(23.1)	(31.4)	(33.2)	(26.0)	(31.5)
Control Mean	356.4	342.8	363.0	342.5	357.5	353.3	349.3	351.1
N	16,027	18,243	22,772	21,978	22,253	24,346	23,058	28,483

Notes: Table shows the main RD estimates under alternative specifications for the kernel and polynomial order. Separate MSE-optimal bandwidths are calculated on each side of the donut for each regression. The first two columns show RD estimates for the stock population (enrolled September 2013) and the placebo stock population (September 2011) using Y_i 18 months later, using the controls described in the text. The third and fourth columns re-weight observations using a triangular kernel. The last four columns replicate this exercise using a quadratic fit on either side of the RD. Control mean is the predicted mean of the corresponding outcome variable immediately to the right of the age 50 threshold (the intercept with the cutoff).

Figure A.14: RD Estimates of Employment and Earnings at Other Intervals, Without Controls



(a) Employment



(b) Earnings

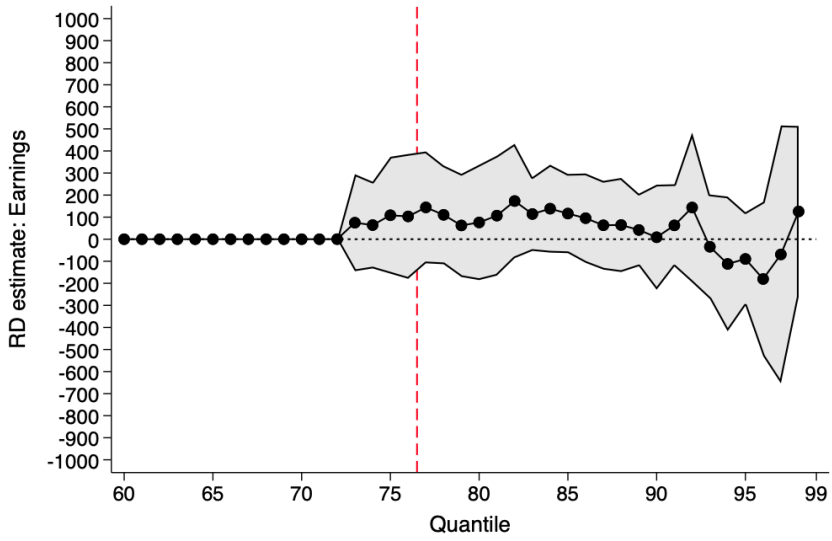
Notes: Figure shows RD coefficients for employment and earnings, repeated for other intervals in addition to the baseline interval, in models without controls. Each estimate calculated using a separate MSE-optimal bandwidths on each side of the donut. Shaded regions denote 95 percent confidence intervals that cluster standard errors on monthly age.

Table A.4: RD Estimates of Key Outcomes Without Controls, 18 Months After Work Requirements

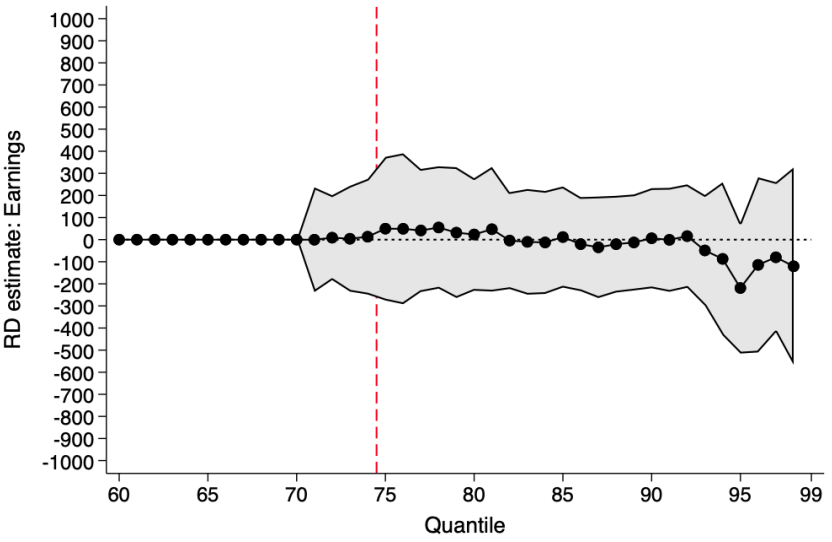
	Main Stock (September 2013)	Placebo Stock (ARRA Period)
Panel A. SNAP Participation		
Discontinuity	-0.250	0.014
	(0.014)	(0.021)
Control Mean	0.631	0.663
N	17,438	13,699
Panel B. Employment		
Discontinuity	0.009	0.006
	(0.018)	(0.015)
Control Mean	0.281	0.278
N	16,052	15,176
Panel C. Employed or Earned Income		
Discontinuity	-0.001	0.010
	(0.021)	(0.017)
Control Mean	0.345	0.333
N	14,739	15,176
Panel D. Earnings		
Discontinuity	14.7	25.4
	(25.3)	(29.4)
Control Mean	368.4	343.0
N	15,081	15,877
Panel E. Log Earnings		
Discontinuity	0.051	0.109
	(0.108)	(0.105)
Control Mean	1.941	1.854
N	17,324	15,606
Panel F. Exemption (Other than Age)		
Discontinuity	0.053	-0.015
	(0.013)	(0.012)
Control Mean	0.096	0.111
N	15,137	18,564

Notes: Table shows regressions coefficients from local linear RD specifications with a uniform kernel, without covariates. Standard errors clustered by monthly age (the running variable) are reported in parentheses. Control mean is the predicted mean of the corresponding outcome variable immediately to the right of the age 50 threshold (the intercept with the cutoff). Employment and earnings are measured from UI records. Log earnings calculated as $\ln(y+1)$. Earnings include those with zero UI earnings, and are winsorized at the 99 percent level by monthly age. The variables Earned Income and Exemption status are reported on DSS records.

Figure A.15: Heterogeneity in RD Estimates of Earnings Using Same Bandwidth, During ARRA Exemptions Placebo Period



(a) Placebo During ARRA Exemptions: 18-Month Interval



(b) Placebo During ARRA Exemptions: 24-Month Interval

Notes: Figure plots coefficients from individual-level regressions of monthly earnings. Each coefficient is from a separate regression for that quantile using the recentered influence function method of Firpo et al. (2009). Estimates are from the placebo population of individuals on SNAP in September 2011, when the ARRA exemption that suspended work requirements was in effect for an additional two years. Top panel measures earnings in March 2013; bottom panel measures earnings in September 2013. Shading denotes 95 percent confidence intervals using robust standard errors.

B Institutional Details of Virginia SNAP

B.1 ABAWD Work Requirement Exemptions

Individuals are exempt from general work registration if they are younger than 16 years old, 60 years old or older, working 30 hours or more each week, receiving or applying to receive unemployment insurance, serving as a caretaker of a child under the age of 6, temporarily or permanently incapacitated, ill or disabled, regularly participating in an alcohol or substance abuse rehabilitation program, aged 16 or 17 and attending school for at least a half-time basis, aged 16 or 17 but not head of household, enrolled in a recognized school, job skills training, or institution of higher education for at least a half-time basis, already complying with another assistance program's work requirements (e.g., TANF or unemployment compensation), or a full-time caretaker of an incapacitated person. Adults are exempt from ABAWD work requirements if they are younger than 18 years old, aged 50 or older, pregnant, medically certified as unable to work, living in a household that includes a child under the age of 18, exempt from general work registration or living in a locality that is exempt from work requirements. A Localities (counties and independent cities) may also receive exemptions from the ABAWD work requirements in some circumstances. Specifically, the state office analyzes data and submits a waiver of the requirements for localities that meet qualifications established by the USDA/FNS. A locality may receive an exemption from work requirements if it has a recent 12-month average of unemployment rate above 10 percent, a recent 3-month average unemployment rate above 10 percent, a historical seasonal unemployment rate above 10 percent, a designation as a Labor Surplus Area by the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, a qualification for extended unemployment benefits by the Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance Service, a low and declining employment-to-population ratio, a lack of jobs in declining occupations or industries, or a recent 24-month average unemployment rate that is 20 percent above the national average for the same 24-month period.

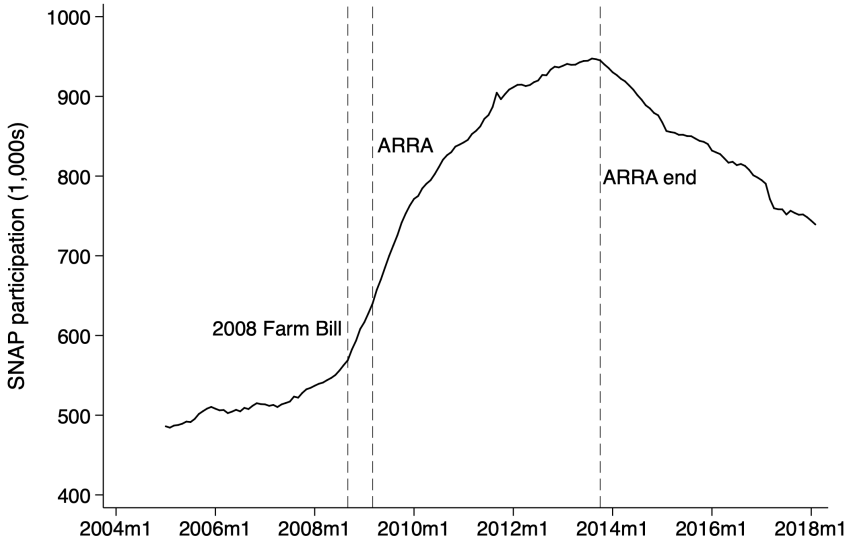
Other than these exemptions, ABAWDs who have already exhausted their allotted SNAP benefits (i.e., 3 months in a 36-month window) can maintain or regain eligibility for SNAP benefits by working at least 20 hours or more per week, participating in an employment services program operated by the Virginia Department of Social Services for 20 hours or more per week (or for at least the number of hours equal to the household's benefits amount divided by the federal minimum wage), participating in an approved work program for 20 hours or more a week, or volunteering for at least the number of hours equal to a household's benefits divided by the federal minimum wage. The state is also annually allotted (by the USDA) a reserve of monthly exemptions based on 15 percent of the number

of ABAWD enrollees who live in the state who are not exempted otherwise and do not live in exempted localities. These exemptions may be used by the state to extend the certification period.

B.2 Virginia's Reinstatement of Work Requirements

ABAWD work requirements were reinstated in Virginia on October 1, 2013 coinciding with the end of state-wide work requirement exemptions under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which lasted from April 2009 to September 2013. As shown in Figure B.1, participation rose substantially during the ARRA period but began to fall soon afterwards. The end of ARRA also coincided with an approximately 7 percent drop in the level of SNAP benefits allotted to SNAP recipients in Virginia (Figure B.2). The identification strategy based on regression discontinuity accounts for this benefit change in estimating the causal effect of work requirements, since the benefit change occurs similarly on both sides of the age 50 cutoff.

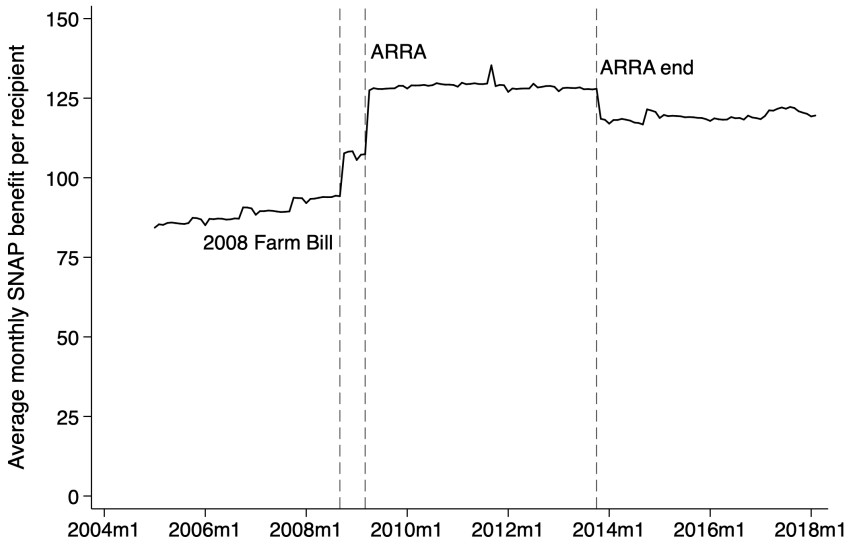
Figure B.1: Monthly SNAP Participation



Notes: Figure plots monthly SNAP participation across Virginia measured in thousands. Participation rose substantially during the ARRA period before falling in 2014.

Prior to the reinstatement of work requirements, individuals typically would receive 12-month recertification periods. Individuals who began their current benefit receipt period prior to the reinstatement of work requirements continued to receive SNAP benefits up to their recertification date, which would occur after reinstatement. At recertification, their work compliance was evaluated. If they were found to be in compliance of work requirements

Figure B.2: Monthly Benefit Amounts, per SNAP recipient



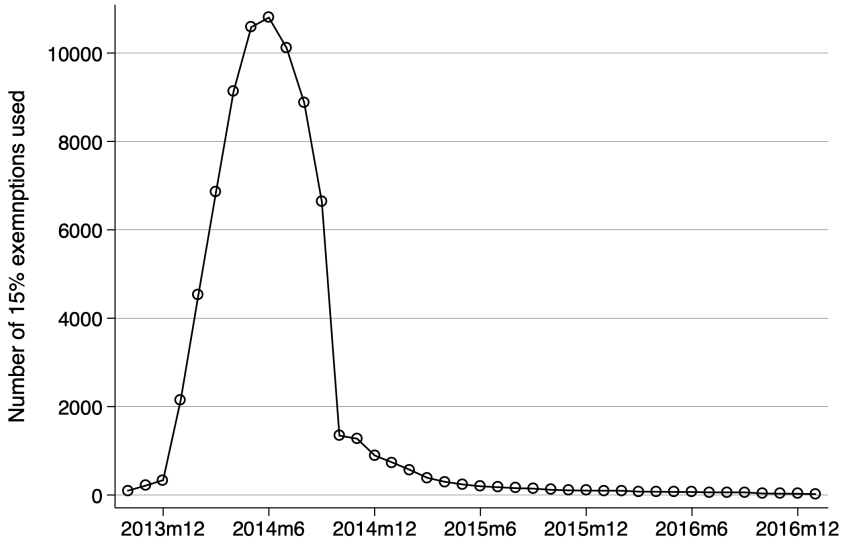
Notes: Figure plots monthly benefits per SNAP recipient across Virginia, calculated as total benefits divided by total SNAP participation. Benefits were reduced by about 7 percent at the end of ARRA.

at recertification, they were given a 12-month recertification period. If they were found not to be in compliance, they were given a 6-month recertification period. This recertification period was composed of an initial partial month of benefits, 3 months allotted for a 36-month window, and a remaining 2 months of exemptions from the reserve of 15 percent exemptions allotted to the state. If after this 6-month period they were again found not to be in compliance with work requirements, they were immediately disenrolled from the program and stopped receiving benefits. The distribution of 15 percent waiver exemptions over time is shown in Figure B.3. These waivers were heavily used throughout most of 2014 but were sparingly used after September of 2014. As a result, Figure B.4 displays a correspondingly large spike in exits of ABAWDs in October of 2014 due to exhaustion of allowable benefit months. If after this 6-month period they were found to be in compliance of work requirements, they were given a 12-month recertification period.

Virginia initially reinstated ABAWD work requirements for all counties in the state on October 1, 2013. However, starting in May 2014, Virginia obtained exemptions for ABAWDs living in 23 counties. Individuals who live in these counties and whose recertifications occurred after the reinstatement of work requirements but before May 2014 received 6 month recertifications. As a result, Figure B.4 shows that ABAWD exits due to exhaustion of allotted benefit months from exempt counties is almost non-existent after October 2014. Those recertifying after May 2014 in exempt counties received 12 month

recertifications.

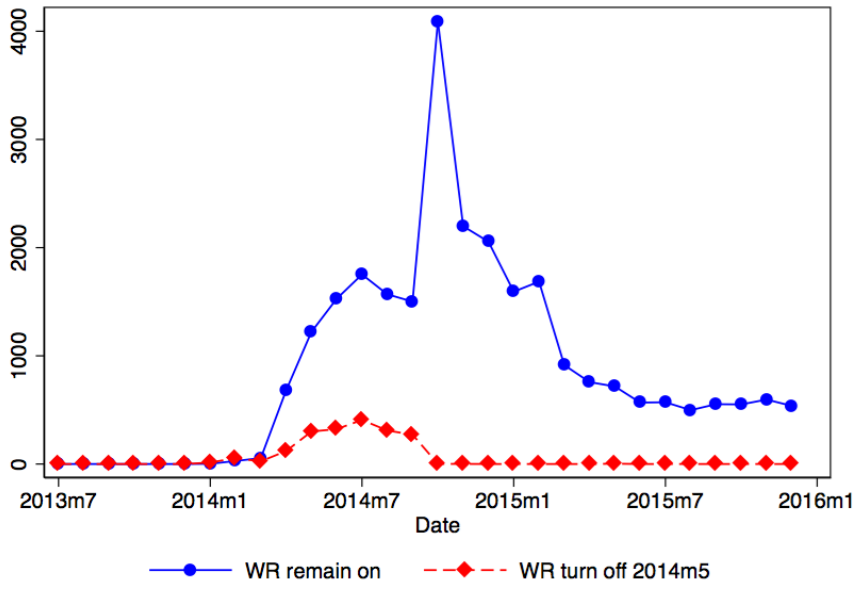
Figure B.3: Number of ABAWD 15 Percent Exemptions Used



Notes: Figure plots the count of 15 percent waiver exemptions used in Virginia each month. One unit corresponds to one ABAWD being allowed to remain on SNAP for one additional month despite not meeting work requirements. The 15 percent exemptions were primarily used to extend the benefit eligibility of ABAWDs who would otherwise have been removed from SNAP following the reintroduction of work requirements in October 2013.

Finally, ABAWDs who newly enrolled between October 2013 and September 2014 were (theoretically) given 6-month recertification periods. Again, these recertification periods were composed of an initial partial month of benefits, 3 months allotted for a 36-month window, and a remaining 2 months of exemptions from the reserve of 15 percent exemptions allotted to the state. Since 15 percent exemption waivers were not used as readily after September of 2014, those who newly enrolled on or after May of 2014 did not receive a full 6 months of benefits if they did not meet work requirements. And those enrolling between July 2014 and September 2017 generally only received 4-month recertification periods. The variation in recertification periods corresponds to drops in SNAP participation among cohorts of recipients who enroll after October 2013, as depicted in Figure A.5: Figure A.5a shows that the RD point estimate among new participants with 6-month recertifications (October 2013 to April 2014 cohorts) drops substantially in the seventh month. In contrast, Figure A.5b shows that among those with 4-month recertifications (May 2014 to December 2014 cohorts), participation drops in the fifth month. In both cases the RD effects are large and largely comparable in magnitude to the effect estimated using the stock population in the main text.

Figure B.4: Count of SNAP Exits Due to Failure to Meet ABAWD Work Requirements



Notes: Figure plots the count of SNAP exits that occur as a result of exhausting allowable benefit months without fulfilling work requirements.